CBW

Number One
For PSV Professionals

COACH AND BUS WEEK April 26, 2006 **Issue 727** £2.50

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Now every Wednesday

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Coach Rally

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FREE! Minibus magazine inside

CONGRATULATIONS!

FROM SETRA

EvoBus (UK) Ltd would like to congratulate Buzzlines for winning Coach of the Year, the Peter Rogers Trophy, and Guild of British Coach Operators Trophy

Congratulations also to Macpherson Coaches of Swadlincote for Top Touring/ Express Luxury Coach (Class B) and the Kassbohrer Trophy for Top Setra

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CBW

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is published by Rouncy Media,
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Full annual subscription rate for 51 issues:
UK £69, Europe/Eire £115, USA and rest of the world £140

www.cbwnet.co.uk

ISSN: 1351-3877

Printed by: William Gibbons & Sons

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Wight flag flying?

The outcome of the Isle of Wight saga, with the council compromising on parking charges, should be seen as at least a partial surrender.

Operators, attractions and hoteliers who fought hard to support the coach industry on the island should be proud of what's been achieved, and operators and its trade associations should take positives from the fact that we banged the drum loudly and somebody listened.

As I commented last week, the overall notion that tourism development should be aiming to increase the spend and quality of what it does should not be lost on operators; there is room for all levels of business, but seeking imaginative ways to make coach travel appeal to the upper end of the market should be an obsession.

It is quite plain from even the muted press release from the Chamber of Commerce that ex-Wallace Arnold fitter Andy Sutton is far from repentant. Blaming the journalist who faithfully recorded his words suggests he'd rather shoot the messenger than admit that he's rabidly anti-coach.

But Mr Sutton isn't the Isle of Wight (not even a 'local', in fact) and the Isle of Wight is still one of the prettiest and most accommodating coach destinations in Britain. If it is serious about moving further upmarket at times when there isn't yacht racing at Cowes, surely that lies not in being negative about its tourists but being positive about its many jewels.

I don't know him, but Mr Steel who runs Wight Rollers was reported by *CBW*'s mole at the meeting as having put the case for operators well, so well done that man. Janneke Oxley of Ventnor Towers was also, apparently, very influential.

I hope that the industry now declares a truce, but on one condition; that the Isle of Wight works with the coach industry, not against it, to develop in the direction it wants. Improving the product should be a common aim.

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
Editor

Coach and Bus Week is a supporter of the following organisations:

COACH TOURISM COUNCIL
Promoting Travel and Tourism by Coach

ABC

cpt

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When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

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Ladyman in 'no' shock

But he refers 'red diesel' idea to the Revenue

Transport minister Stephen Ladyman has responded to *CBW*'s demand for fuel duty rebate to be extended to coaches.

CBW launched its 'Fair Tax Not Fuel Tax' campaign in January, and asked operators to fax a prepared letter to the DfT asking for a level playing field with other forms of public transport.

After receiving a "number" of letters from *CBW* readers on the subject, Mr Ladyman last week wrote to *CBW* acknowledging the role coaches play in providing affordable long distance travel. But, disappointingly, he says the government does not think there is a "strong enough case" for extending fuel subsidies to coach operators.

He does however say he is interested in a "red diesel" scheme for buses and coaches.

In the letter to *CBW*, Mr Ladyman wrote: "One of the great strengths of the coach industry is that it operates successfully on a commercial basis without subsidy. Although costs have gone up, I do not feel that there is a strong enough case for extending subsidies in the way you suggest."

He cites the introduction of the funding for scheduled coach services in May 2003 to cover the cost of half price concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled as evidence that the government does support the industry. He continues: "This scheme is now worth £12m a year to this sector of the coach industry and hopefully this demonstrates that we recognise the sector's importance in helping to deliver our transport and social inclusion objectives."

With reference to our suggestion that buses and coaches be included in the "red diesel" scheme, he says: "I was interested to hear your views that the "red diesel" scheme for fuel used in the agriculture industry be extended to buses and coaches. However, decisions on this are essentially a matter for HM Revenue and Customs and I have asked my officials to forward your letter to them."

Ladyman: "case not strong enough"

On the separate issue of the amount of regulation being heaped on the industry, Mr Ladyman wrote: "I can assure [you] that any proposal to increase regulation is assessed very carefully to ensure that the benefits exceed the costs, with particular regard to the potential impacts on small and medium-sized businesses."

CBW editor Mark Williams says: "This is the start of the campaign, not the end. We did not expect them to roll over at our first attempt. But at least the government has acknowledged that costs to coach operators have risen, and is thinking about ways it can help."

IW's Sutton backs down

The Isle of Wight Council has climbed down over coach parking charges after a summit meeting on the island.

Council leader Andy Sutton faced criticism of his comments in a magazine that coaching brings nothing but road wear to the island but told the meeting - hosted by the Chamber of Commerce - that his remarks had been taken out of context, and conceded that coaching does contribute to tourism.

After the meeting, the council announced that it is to extend the validity of its four-day, £60 coach parking charge to seven days, and will be restructuring the system in due course.

Hotelier Jim Blanchett, who was at the meeting, told *CBW*: "This was the right outcome. The meeting was intense but to the point. We had a discussion on the effects of what had been said and done. The central message that comes out is that consultation is all-important. We were particularly impressed with Mr Steel of Wight Rollers coach company in Sandown, who worked hard to show the industry in its best light."

The official statement from the Chamber of Commerce says: "Both IW Council and the IW Chamber of Commerce advocate working together to increase the quality of the visitor experience, which is part of the Island's long-term tourism strategy. As a direct result of this meeting, and to demonstrate goodwill, the IW Council has agreed to extend the current four-day coach parking permit to seven days at the same rate of £60..."

However, the statement says: "...Andy Sutton assured those present that he does recognise the significant contribution some sections of this sector bring to the Island's economy. He stated that the IW Council very much welcomed high-value coach visitors to quality destinations here on the island."

Meanwhile, *CBW* has received many letters and phone calls from stakeholders angered by Cllr Sutton's remarks. Redwing Coaches in London says: "The Solent is already the most expensive stretch of water in the UK. Our customers will be well advised to go to France, because it is cheaper and there may be more to do." Kevin Radley of Radley Holidays says, "I intend to end my current departures to the IW as soon as practically possible and then boycott the destination until common sense prevails."

Wightlink Ferries sales director Ian Winn says: "The revenue coach tourism generates is extremely important to us all and supports our policy of according it the appropriate priority it deserves."

Bob Pilbeam, CPT coaching consultant, says: "If the IW is serious about tourism, about trading up the market and extending the season, it should be talking to the CPT and coach operators on how best we can help each other."

Coach parties should still be able to enjoy the beautiful Isle of White

Buzzlines won the Coach of the Year competition at the Brighton Rally last weekend. Driver Chris Hunt is pictured here receiving the award from traffic commissioner Brigadier Tom McCartney. The 13.2m tri-axle Setra 416 GT-HD comfort class coach has 49 seats, sat nav and laptop power points. Chris Bibby of Bibby's of Ingleton won the Coach Driver of the Year competition at last weekend's UK Coach Rally, while his father Peter Bibby carried off the Director's Driving Challenge trophy. For full details turn to page 8.

Buses come under MP's scrutiny

The influential Transport Select Committee has launched an inquiry into bus services in the UK, including a specific investigation into the implementation of the Concessionary Travel scheme.

The move has been welcomed by at least one PTE, with other industry stakeholders saying they will definitely be making representations.

In its notice of the inquiry the Committee says: "Our predecessor Committee looked at the bus industry in 2002. Then, it expressed optimism that the long-term decline in bus use appeared to have been halted. Four years on, these hopes have not been realised. The Committee will examine why."

Committee chairman Gwyneth Dunwoody says special attention will be paid to free bus travel, including problems with the "current approach" and whether plans to create a national scheme "stand up to scrutiny". The Committee will also consider the lack of uptake of Quality Contracts, the role of the Traffic Commissioners and whether areas outside of London should be allowed to develop their own bus regulation models.

Cllr Gary Clarke, the Centro-PTA chairman welcomed the inquiry, saying: "The MPs say they will be asking whether the structure of the industry has meant bus services are better, more frequent or meeting passenger need? We think they are not and that passengers in the West Midlands deserve better."

The CPT has already said it will be making a submission.

Memoranda to the Committee should be made before May 24, 2006, and be a maximum of six A4 pages in length. Details on www.parliament.uk/transcom.

STOP PRESS

The CPT is calling on the Mayor of London to defer the introduction of the Low Emission Zone for at least two years.

Brian Nimick, CPT director general says: "Whilst we recognise that the Mayor has a commitment to improve London's air quality, and agree with his overall objective, we feel the current proposals may well have the opposite affect, by driving people away from coach travel. It is unrealistic to expect the coach industry, and more importantly our passengers, to absorb costs of this magnitude, over this timescale."

The CPT estimates that the LEZ will cost the industry £250m, and encourage modal shift away from coaches, particularly express services.

Briefly

David Cameron, the Conservative Party leader says he wants more school buses, to cut down on the unneccessary use of cars on the school run. He stopped short of making a policy statement when speaking on BBC's Breakfast programme, but the party says "ideas are coming", to do with the school run in particular.

A man was stabbed on a bus in Liverpool at the weekend after allegedly bumping into another passenger while disembarking. The attacker re-boarded the vehicle and stabbed the man in the thigh, after the incident. The man escaped on foot.

Wheelchair users in East Anglia say they are missing out on the concessionary travel scheme because of the lack of accessible coaches in the region. First Group told the local newspaper that coaches with lifts would not available in the area for 10 years.

Stephen Tetlow, VOSA chief executive, is the speaker at the next CPT London & Home Counties dinner discussion evening on May 11. Any questions operators have should be submitted to the CPT by April 28. Booking forms and payment – at the reduced price of £35 – should be received by May 8. Contact Ling Tang on 0207 240 3131 for more info.

British Airways increased its fuel surcharge to £35 per one-way long haul trip last week as the price of oil reached an all-time high. Brent crude hit $74.10 per barrel last Thursday before settling back to $73.73 as CBW went to press.

Fifteen passengers were evacuated from an Arriva decker in North Tyneside this week when it burst into flames. Nobody was injured. The cause of the fire is unknown.

BUSES

Scotland looks at TfL model

New proposals study London experience

The Scottish Executive has put its new National Transport Strategy out for public consultation, which includes a major review of the way bus services are provided in the country.

The consultation will last until mid-July, with the final proposals being made at the end of 2006. The Executive will hold a conference on May 30 in Edinburgh as part of the consultation process.

A spokeswoman told *CBW*: "This is a blue sky exercise to gain an understanding of the bigger transport picture in the next 20 years. It will set the context for the investment we need to make in transport after 2012."

She added that bus services are central to many of the Executive's policy objectives like social inclusion and reducing journey times and congestion, but that specific proposals will come out as a result of the consultation. However, the document itself provides an insight on the Executive's thinking.

A passage from the section on buses says: "Our stakeholders have told us, however, that there is significant concern about how the bus industry works, particularly in areas where there are a number of operators and little apparent inter-operator integration. Options for improving this include consideration of what we can do to further encourage and develop the strengths of the de-regulated market and to identify and tackle its weaknesses, and further investigating the London model to see whether there are any aspects which can be usefully applied in the Scottish context."

The consultation document also examines ways to improve the relationships between operators and local authorities, including "revisiting the rules on Quality Partnerships and Quality Contracts", and possibly "requiring local authorities to be more pro-active in working with bus operators to ease congestion". The consultation will also consider "area-based approaches such as Quality Networks".

Go-Ahead subsidiary Metrobus has pressed its 'interim' East Lancs Esteem buses into service. Having seen the Esteem in development, the company insisted on its new buses being fitted with the latest styling at the front, and the Esteem's cantilever rear boot flap. Metrobus will have 23 of the new vehicles in service, seven of which have already been delivered. All are on the Scania N94UB chassis, with 29 seats and dual doors. They cover two new TfL routes won from Stagecoach in South East London.

Cash shortage forces cuts

South Yorkshire PTE will cut or reduce several bus services in Doncaster, Sheffied and Rotherham because the government funding for the routes has run out. The routes have been supported for the last six years, but in many cases have failed to become commercially viable. Robert Shepherdson, SYPTE team leader of rural transport says: "As a result of this the Transport Executive has no alternative but to make savings of £250,000 and this has resulted in some changes being made to bus services. On a positive note we are still investing more than £0.5m of taxpayers' money in the remaining network to preserve many vital local links."

Arriva's Bob Davies retired last week after seven years in charge

Davies retires at the top

ARRIVA's chief executive Bob Davies, after over seven years at the helm, officially retired after the company's Annual General Meeting last week.

Chairman Sir Richard Broadbent, paid tribute to the changes achieved under his stewardship: "Bob's vision and leadership has transformed Arriva into a leading public transport organisation. The Group is in very good shape. It is strategically focused, delivering consistent results and has an excellent management team," he said.

Under Mr Davies' leadership, the group moved out of car selling, leasing and rental, wholeheartedly into bus and rail, and is now the largest UK group with operations across Europe.

Sir Richard said that some years ago, Arriva identified the growth opportunity arising from the liberalisation of public transport markets in mainland Europe. The strategy of selective investment in these markets delivered growth with revenue, with mainland European operations doubling over the past three years and margins increasing.

Reporting on 2005, he said that contract wins abroad and the successful entry into the German bus market strengthened Arriva's position as a leading European transport operator and increased its resilience in the highly competitive transport market.

"Arriva remains in a strong position to benefit in the increasingly liberalising European transport market and we see further opportunities for our UK bus and rail operations through innovation and encouraging greater use of public transport," he says.

David Martin, who was appointed to the board in 1998, and was responsible for international operations has taken over as chief executive.

Mega order for Look CCTV

Stagecoach has announced what it describes as the biggest UK order for CCTV cameras, from Look CCTV. The £1.2m order will see the equipment installed in all the vehicles in its recently announced order for 460 buses. The cameras will be fitted inside and outside of the vehicles as part of an accident prevention campaign. The vehicles will be delivered from this month until February 2007. Look CCTV has been Stagecoach's preferred supplier since last year.

Stagecoach's CCTV order is thought to be the biggest ever

AMC summonsed over defective vehicles

Defective vehicles case adjourned

A case against a Dublin operator and several drivers accused of operating seriously defective vehicles has been adjourned until October.

More than 50 summonses have been served in the case against Alan Martin Coaches (AMC) of Blanchardstown and 8 of the company's drivers.

The summonses allege that vehicles were found to be dangerously defective, did not have certificates of road worthiness, or were unfit for public service. Some had no public service vehicle licences and were not taxed on various dates between May and June 2005.

Following legal argument over the legal status of Mr Martin's business name, Judge Brian Sheridan adjourned the case for hearing to October 17 at Dublin District Court.

Crash school bus driver "on l licence"

The driver of the minibus which crashed near Clara, Co Offaly in April held only a provisional licence, and should not have been driving unaccompanied, Gardai have told *CBW*. The team investigating the accident, in which a schoolboy died, have also confirmed that the owner, Ray McKeown, has not been able to produce evidence of insurance for the vehicle.

"We have widened the scope of the investigation from the purely technical to cover the issues of driver and vehicle licensing," a Garda source told *CBW*. Earlier, it was disclosed that the 33-seat Alexander Mercedes minibus involved in the accident had not been licensed as part of Mr. McKeown's fleet. The 17-year old bus went out of control and rolled over when the rear axle became detached from the chassis.

Gardai have confirmed that other vehicles in the fleet are insured and licensed correctly as PSVs.

Bus company goes bust

Amberlee Buses, which runs stage carriage work in Medway, Kent, has gone into administration. The company, which ran 14 services from its base in Rochester, ceased trading last Wednesday after a series of creditors meetings in February and the appointment of an administrator in early January.

The company was in the news in 2004 after a spate of vandalism had cost the firm £50,000 in damage to windows and seats. Managing director Lee Wilde said then that he was "tired" of the continuing damage, and complained that police were not taking the incidents seriously.

***CBW* could not contact a representative of the company before going to press, and the administrators did not want to comment on the case. The services are being covered by Arriva.**

Bus lane challenge

Private hire taxi drivers in Edinburgh are to challenge the validity of bus lane restrictions applying to their vehicles. Currently only buses, cyclists and black cabs are allowed to use bus lanes in the city.

Drivers have been asked to contribute £10 each to a legal fund to fight a test case, arguing that they are also a form of public transport. One driver has volunteered to defend a prosecution.

Edinburgh's Private Hire Association has hired a lawyer, John Muir, to fight the case. He says: "I am seeking a QC's opinion on the legality of the [bus lane] system in Edinburgh. I find it absurd and it is unfair on the Edinburgh public. It is unlikely that the District Court in Edinburgh will tolerate breaking the law, however I would hope to take this to a higher level at the Court of Session."

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UK COACH RALLY

Clockwise from top left: Roadliner's impressive looking Scania Irizar PB won the trophy for best coach from a small fleet. This ex-Flights AEC was immaculate, and the glass roof gave the interior the bright and spacious feel most modern coaches can only wish for. Coaching across the generations: Thomas of Barrry's Setra contrasts nicely with an ex-Kenzie Bedford and some old friends. Meridian Line brought its rare MAN Ayats single decker coach. Banstead brought its brand new Mercedes-Benz Touro, which starred in the *Concours d'Elegance* competition, and in the driver's tests

Cold and wet but worth it

Coach Rally a great success despite April showers on the final day

You could say the UK Coach Rally in Brighton last weekend was lucky with the weather – just a few miles up the road there was torrential rain. As it was, the spectators and competitors who enjoyed summer weather during the preliminary tests on Saturday, paid the price on Sunday with a constant drizzle and grey skies.

Nevermind, it is not called the UK Coach Rally for nothing. Competitors from as far afield as North East Scotland and Yorkshire were not going to let a bit of typical British weather spoil their fun. Nervous anticipation ran high throughout the judging for the *Concours d'Elegance* competition on Sunday morning, as much because of that as for the driver's test final which followed.

Concours d'elegance

The standard of vehicles entered in the *Concours d'Elegance* competition was fantastically high – *CBW* knows because, as one of the judges in the exterior workmanship category, we were examining the vehicles very closely.

Even so it was no surprise that Buzzlines won Coach of the Year. Its tri-axle Setra 416 GT-HD was immaculate. Details like a thin strip of underseal along the bottom edge of the luggage door, and the floor of the luggage area looking untouched despite having been in service for some months, swung it for us. I think we deducted a mark out of sheer bloody mindedness.

Other eye-catching vehicles included Roadliner of Dorset's green and black Scania PB, even with its destination/ message display, and Banstead's Mercedes-Benz Touro, another vehicle whose stylish livery makes the most out of its sleek side glazing. Neither of them went home empty handed: Roadliner won the John Fielder Memorial Trophy for the top coach from a small fleet, and Banstead won Top Standard Coach, and a special award from Mercedes-Benz.

Many of the top coaches had painted-in manufacturer logos on their tyres - but none so expertly applied as on this Reptons vehicle

The Coach Driver of the Year competition is a real test of precision driving skills

Above: the directors check out the course ahead of the Director's Challenge, won by Peter Bibby, centre left

Above and left: Tellings Golden Miller's massive 14m Van Hool was manoeuvered expertly around the driver's course. Amazingly, the driver did not knock over any cones

Go Goodwins' Van Hool stood out too, and not just because it was parked in the first space - as it was last year, and as the company will be next year. Go Goodwins must be wondering what it needs to do to lift the main prize, its stunning English Cricket Team tri-axle Astron was perfectly presented. Similarly, Tellings Golden Miller did not regain its Coach of the Year title and had to content itself with Best in All Classes, Top Team of the Year and the Peter Bostock Trophy for having the highest placed driver, Richard Telling, in the Saturday driving tests.

Driving double act

Without a doubt, the day belonged to Bibby's of Ingleton. Chris Bibby won Coach Driver of the Year while his father Peter won the Director's Challenge. But the biggest shock was that last year's winner Mark Shaw went out in the first round.

Peter Bibby is a five time winner of the CDOTY prize and the pressure was on Chris to chalk his name on the board for the first time. *CBW* first spoke to him before the results of the first round were announced and he did not sound over confident of having even made the final. It turns out he was in third place with 160 faults, against Banstead's Matthew Haynes with 110, and Go Goodwins with 60.

CBW was therefore not completely convinced when, after a supremely confident test which saw him throw his Van Hool around with pin-point accuracy, and reverse full bore through the narrow bridge section, he said he thought he was in third place. His team-mates thought he had stopped six inches too short at one point, and he was worried about having not reversed far enough on another test - although he watched his dad stop at precisely the same place as he had.

Somebody else who was not taking prisoners in his test was Matthew Haynes, who threw his Touro around Bibby's-style and went on to claim the runners up prize, the West Middlesex Coach Operators Association Trophy.

Another distinguished competitor was Richard Telling, obviously not too disadvantaged steering a whopping 14m Van Hool Alizee around a course that Peter Bibby reckoned was much narrower than in his day.

Right up until the penultimate test, Chris Bibby thought his main competition was the amazing new comer, Robert Morton. The lack of sun might have taken the sparkle out of Morton's snazzy decals, but it did not take the sparkle out of his driving style. The owner driver has only been in business since July 2004, and drove one of his three new Van Hools around the course faultlessly until he left the 'garage' without waiting for the marshals to measure his distance from the barrier, ruling himself out of the competition.

UK COACH RALLY

Not a bad day for Bibby's

Chris Bibby of Bibby's of Ingleton won the Coach Driver of the Year competition at last weekend's UK Coach Rally, while his father Peter Bibby carried off the Director's Driving Challenge trophy. Buzzlines' immaculate Setra 416 GT-HD won Coach of the Year. Before presenting the prizes, traffic commissioner Brigadier Tom McCartney called on vehicle manufacturers to give more support to the event. Lack of support from the manufacturers, and a rumoured 30% hike in the rent for the seafront Madeira Drive from Brighton City Council, has put the event under some pressure. Even so, the organisers announced the dates for next year: April 14-15, 2007.

Top: Chris Bibby waits patiently at the head of the queue to receive his award. Left: The trophies were presented by traffic commissioner Brigadier Tom McCartney. Right: Chris' dad Peter Bibby winning one of his five Coach Driver of the Year titles

And the (other) winners are...

TROPHIES AND AWARDS

Coach Driver of the Year
Chris Bibby, Bibby's
Coach of the Year
Buzzlines

Best in all Classes
Tellings Golden Miller

Top Team of the Year
Tellings Golden Miller

Peter Bostock Trophy
Tellings Golden Miller

Top Lady Driver
Louisa Fairhead, Homeward Bound

Mini/Midi Driver of the Year
Homeward Bound

West Middlesex Coach Operators Association Trophy Runner up to Coach Driver of the Year
Matthew Haynes, Banstead Coaches

Special Class
Directors Challenge
Peter Bibby, Bibby's of Ingleton

CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE AWARDS

Top Mini/Midi
(Class IA)
London Mini Coaches

Top Standard Coach
(Class 2AA)
Banstead Coaches

Top Touring/Express Luxury Coach (Class B)
Macpherson

Top Dual Purpose Bus or Coach (Class C)
National Express (Crawley)

Trophy for Top Executive Coach (Class D)
Go Goodwins

Top Coach aged 5 years or older (Class E)
Classic Coaches

John Fielder Memorial Trophy
Roadliner

Rita Dalziel Trophy
Coopers Tours

CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE MANUFACTURERS' AWARDS

VDL Berkhof (Top VDL Berkhof) **Prentice Westwood**

Salvador Caetano Trophy
(Top Caetano)
National Express (Crawley)

Neoplan UK Trophy
Thomas of Barry

VDL Jonckheere
(Top Jonckheere)
Paul S Winson

Kassbohrer Trophy
(Top Setra)
Macpherson

Plaxton Trophy
(Top Plaxton)
Burtons

Beulas Trophy
Isleworth Coaches

Kirkby (Top coach supplied by Kirkby) **Burtons**

Van Hool (Top Van Hool)
Go Goodwins

Trisbus Award (Top Irisbus)
Taf Valley

Moseley Trophy (Top Van Hool supplied by Moseley)
Kenzies

Bova Trophy (Top Bova supplied by Moseley)
LJ Edwards

Volvo Trophy
(Top Coach supplied by Volvo Coach Sales)
Paul S Winson

BMC Trophy
Cedar Coaches

BASE Trophy
Bostocks

Above: Go Goodwins collects the Best Executive Coach trophy. Right: Tellings Golden Miller won three awards. Below: Macpherson won Top Touring coach prize

Toyota Trophy
(Top Toyota Optimo)
Not Awarded

SPECIAL AWARDS

Terry Porteous Trophy (Top Optare/Autobus) **Not Awarded**

Elite Award (Best Mini/Midi Coach conversion)
Homeward Bound

Mercedes-Benz
Banstead

Sitcar Beluga
London Mini Coaches

Clarkes
(Best Access for Disabled)
National Express (Crawley)

Boon's Award (Best Co-ordinated Décor)
Motts Travel

Peter Rogers Trophy
Buzzlines

Cymru
(Top coach from Wales)
Thomas of Barry

Tony Roose Trophy
(Top Coach from Scotland)
Maynes of Buckie

Coach Drivers Club of Great Britain
(Drivers Quiz)
Tellings Golden Miller

LTCOA Challenge Trophy
Burtons

Leisurewear Direct
(Smartest Leisurewear uniformed driver &/or courier)
Roadliner

Leisurewear Direct
(Smartest uniformed driver &/or courier for a small fleet)
Roadliner

Leisurewear Direct
(Smartest uniformed driver &/or courier for a medium fleet)
Go Goodwin

Leisurewear Direct
(Smartest uniformed driver &/or courier for a large fleet)
Maynes of Buckie

Guild of British Coach Operators
Buzzlines

COACHES

NE derby ambush for coaches

Rival supporters reported to have ambushed Magpies fans

The driver of a coach caught in an ambush by football supporters says the incident was the worst he has ever seen, and that it could have been prevented.

He is calling on police to review their procedures after the slow moving convoy of 65 coaches carrying Newcastle football supporters was ambushed by brick throwing rival Sunderland fans on Bank Holiday Monday. A passenger and a driver were injured and eight vehicles were damaged.

Driver Steve Hyson - the man at the centre of the A Coach Company "Phoenix application" affair - was driving the eighth vehicle in line, a Kingsley coach, when the convoy came under attack. He told *CBW*: "You have the odd thing happen on jobs like this, but nothing as serious as this. The police were completely under resourced, they had 10 bikes and two vans for 65 vehicles, so we had to slow to 5mph. Bricks just came hurling from across the road. When I got hit (a side window on his vehicle was put out), I pulled out and went to the head of the convoy but they just told me to go back to my place and carry on. It's an absolute disgrace. I had children on my bus. It was absolutely ridiculous."

A passenger on one vehicle was hit in the face by one of the bricks, and a driver on another coach was cut by flying glass when his windscreen was smashed. The police made no arrests.

Mr Hyson continues: "This was a local derby match, the police should have realised there would be trouble. It wouldn't have happened if we hadn't been travelling in a convoy, especially so slowly. We were sitting ducks. There was absolutely no foresight at all."

But Superintendant Eric Mock, from the Operations Section at Northumbria Police disputes the number of coaches damaged in the convoy, and the reason it was travelling so slowly. He told *CBW*: "There were two coaches damaged in a convoy of 64 coaches travelling to Newcastle from the Stadium of Light in Sunderland. A coach in the middle of the convoy experienced technical difficulties slowing down part of the convoy and at some distance from the Stadium of Light, a group of youths, not believed to be Sunderland fans, have thrown some bricks." "By its very nature and for obvious safety reasons a convoy is not fast moving and the safety of the coach passengers and drivers, the police motorbike riders escorting the coaches and other road users have to be considered." Other observers disputed the police's estimate of the number of vehicles damaged, saying it was not less than six. David Kingsley told *CBW* that the police use the same route for coaches each time the two teams meet and that the supporters were lying in wait. A police spokeswoman says no action needs to be taken since Sunderland has now been relegated and the two teams will not meet next season.

Ulsterbus' much anticipated new Ayats Bravo III coaches have finally arrived in the province. The company ordered 25 of the new vehicles to use on its Goldliner Express services last year, and enthusiasts have keenly awaited their arrival ever since. The decker coaches represent a first in the UK market, in that they have a low-floor lower deck which is wheel chair accessible through the front door.

Mirror death

The German tourist who died in an accident whilst on a tour of Wales last August was killed by a clipped wing mirror, the inquest has heard.

Jutta Hantke, 63, from East Germany was sat on the upper deck of the Ayats coach when the wing mirror smashed through two windows next to her after being hit by a passing lorry.

The coach was on the narrow rural A482 near Pumsaint in Carmarthenshire, heading for Lampeter, when it met an on-coming HGV. The driver of the lorry, a local farmer, told the inquest that the coach was over the white line, although a witness said the coach driver was on the correct side of the road. The police investigator said both vehicles were either in their correct lane, or very close.

Dunn-Line's Polish buy

Dunn-Line has bought PPKS Gdynia, a Polish coach and bus operator, for £1m. The surprise deal is, however, in line with the company's stated policy to explore acquisition opportunities in the UK and mainland Europe.

The deal, and subsequent investment of a further £1m over the next five years, has been financed by the Veolia Group, who recently bought Dunn-Line itself.

PPKS has a fleet of nearly 50 vehicles and 172 employees and is spread over 10.6 acres and two sites. Gdynia is the modern sister city to Gdansk, birthplace of Solidarity, on the Baltic Sea coast.

French cigs law passed

The CPT is calling on the European Commission to intervene against new French customs laws which mean tourists bringing more than 200 cigarettes through France could be liable for import duty.

CBW broke the story last year after a tip off from an operator that the French government was considering introducing restrictions on the passage of tobacco products through the country. We were told by the French Embassy though that the law had only been passed by the parliament's lower house and was unlikely to make it onto the statute book.

The CPT said at the time that such a move could anyway be unlawful, but has now learned that the law was in fact quietly introduced on January 1, 2006. A statement from the CPT says: "CPT is pressing the European Commission for information on action that it proposes to take against France."

There are different restrictions on the amount of tobacco products that can be carried, depending on the country of origin. Passengers who buy cigarettes in "old" EU member states like Holland and Germany can carry up to 1,000 cigarettes before needing a "document simplifie d'accompagnement". This allows up to 2,000 cigarettes to be carried. The fine for not having the document is €25 per pack of 200. Carrying more than 2,000 is forbidden.

For Rolling tobacco it is thought the amount will be limited by "personal use" guidelines. The limits apply to each passenger on coaches, but to the whole vehicle for cars and trucks, regardless of the number of passengers.

For passengers coming from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, "new" EU member states, the limit is 200 cigarettes per person, after which duty must be paid. Cigarettes bought in France are unaffected by the new rules.

Coach USA falters

Stagecoach-owned Coach USA will reportedly close its Upstate New York operation in June, with the loss of 100 jobs. The company lost a large contract with State University at Buffalo two years ago and had to rely on the charter market after efforts to diversify failed. Spokesman Lee Schissler says: "Charter work is very sporadic. If you are totally reliant on charters, it's very difficult to make a profit. We tried to rebuild and diversify in the region, but we haven't been successful." Coach USA blames rising fuel costs and insurance fees. It will farm its 70 buses out to stations in New York City and the Midwest. As reported last week, Bryony Chamberlain, managing director of Stagecoach Warwickshire, has been appointed operations director at Coach USA.

The Coach USA Upstate New York fleet will be redeployed in NYC

* The *Times* reports that the launch of Stagecoach's Megabus in America got off to a bad start when a faulty fuel gauge stranded the no-frills service on its first return trip, to Chicago from Cleveland. Dale Moser, chief executive officer of Stagecoach USA, told the *Times*: "We were concerned because these buses have ample fuel-tank capacity to cover both legs of this journey. But then we discovered the faulty gauge, which has now been fixed. It was very inconvenient for our customers but just typical that something like this would happen on our first trip."

Briefly

Julian Peddle, who recently sold his Premier Bus Company to Arriva, has increased his shareholding in Telling Golden Miller to 20%. He spent over £30,000 on 100,000 shares in the listed company during the second week of April.

VOSA has begun a crackdown on limousine companies. It has opened a hotline to report companies who break the law, often carrying up to 30 passengers when their licences permit only eight. VOSA believes up to half the limousines in service flout safety laws, some 6,000 vehicles. The industry is expected to double each year for the next five years, having gone from 3,000 cars registered in 2003.

The DfT has sent the Transport Select Committee a 20 page submission on parking enforcement, recommending a softer approach and new statutory guidelines. It says motorists' complaints about over-zealous parking wardens "may be merited".

Operators are becoming concerned about the growing trend for local authorities to cut their discretionary school transport budgets. Northumbria County Council is consulting over plans to cut its funding to faith school pupils from 2007, and now Barnsley is considering the same idea, aimed at saving £200,000 pa. One operator told *CBW* that as well as affecting his business and being potentially discriminatory, cutting discretionary transport just puts more cars on the road.

WA Shearings' new Autumn '06 – Spring '07 brochures include new 'grandparenting tours', aimed at grandparents who want to take their grandchildren on holiday. A two-night Legoland and London Eye break costs £119 for adults and £69 for children. Theatre trips are also available.

Briefly

The shortlist for the National Transport Awards organized by the Centre for Transport Policy in Aberdeen was announced last week. First Aberdeen is the only bus company nominated in the Public Transport Operator of the Year category, the other three are rail operators. Stagecoach North East has been nominated for the Most Innovative Transport Project award.

Nottingham City Transport drivers will be balloted on April 28 over industrial action. The T&G union has turned down a 2.4% pay offer. The two have been in talks since last December without reaching an agreement.

The toll for buses on the Humber Bridge is to be reviewed after Stagecoach said it will withdraw the only route that crosses the river because of the high charges. From April 23, the toll increased from £10 each way to £10.90. The new charges were approved by the Secretary of State for Transport earlier this month.

Arriva headed off a complaint by the Pensions Investment Research Consultants (PIRC) over its executive renumeration package at its AGM last week. PIRC say Arriva's upgraded new executive pay arrangements do not require a substantial increase in performance, and recommended shareholders reject the proposal.

Transport minister Derek Twigg launched the Disability Rights Commission's Code of Practise last week, seven months ahead of its implementation on December 4, 2006. It contains no suprises, good or bad, for coach and bus operators.

A feasability study by Centro-PTA says that extending free travel to the under-16s would increase bus usage by 6%, and cost £39m. If approved, the scheme could be live in 18 months.

Scottish operators threatened with Q.C.s

But minister says he would prefer Quality Partnerships

Scotland's Minister of Transport and Telecommications, Tavish Scott MSP, warned operators that although he would prefer Quality Partnerships, if they aren't developed, Quality Contracts could be used to regulate services.

Speaking at the Confederation of Passenger Transport Scottish Council conference at Gleneagles, Mr Scott Said: "Success is not dependent on ownership of the structure, but I get weekly parliamentary questions on regulation.

"Re-regulation is not the easy option. God forbid that central government ran the bus services, but the re-regulation issue won't go away."

He urged operators to focus on reducing omissions and developing both services and buses, with an emphasis on real-time information.

Scott: "re-regulation issue won't go away"

Asked by CPT Director General Brian Nimick how local authorities - faced with accusations of being anti-car - can be persuaded to be 'brave' and put policy above politics, Mr Scott said: "Politicians and bravery? That's a tough call. Actually I think the public are ahead of politicians on their thinking about transport issues, but what they require is transparency in what is proposed."

Speakers on the first day of the conference included Alexander Dennis's Commercial Director, David Quainton, who charted the arrival of wheelchair accessible buses and coaches, and warned that coach weight is now a serious issue that needs attention from both manufacturers and government.

Full report from Gleneagles next week

Licence revoked

County Durham Minicoach operator, Martindales Taxis and Minicoaches of Shildon, had its operators licence revoked with immediate effect, last Friday. A public inquiry was told that a Mercedes StarRider coach belonging to the firm was found abandoned, after at least one of its nearside rear wheels detached on the road.

The company, owned by Mrs Margaret Martindale, and managed by her son Mark, was not represented at the public inquiry who heard that Mrs Martindale had health problems, was hospitalised, and wished to surrender her licence.

Last week's inquiry was the third sitting this year, after two sittings in January, when the company was said to have consistently missed its four-weekly safety inspections, and could not produce accurate records.

Deputy Traffic Commissioner Miss Elizabeth Perrett said she would not allow the licence to be surrendered, because her repute and professional competence was already hanging by a thread. She said that the licence had been curtailed by two vehicles in January, until two specific vehicles had been retested, and that neither of them had yet been through their MOT. Indeed, one of them was found by the roadside.

Miss Perrett said that she wanted the vehicles off the road and was therefore revoking the licence from 23.59 on April 22. She disqualified Mrs Martindale from holding a licence for five years, not because she thought that Mrs Martindale wanted to operate coaches, but because she could be used as a front by other parties.

Free GoSkills trial

GoSkills is trialing a new 'Initial Assessment Tool', designed for employers in the road passenger transport industry.

The aim is to help identify literacy, numeracy and communication skills in prospective employees and training candidates. The tool has been developed with employers in the coach, bus, taxi and community transport industries, and GoSkills says all aspects of the assessment process reflect real situations. To support trainers using the materials, GoSkills will provide free guidance notes.

Peter Huntington, Chief Executive of GoSkills, said: "I am delighted that we are able to provide resources designed by the industry for the industry. GoSkills is committed to ensuring that employers have a full package of resources available to them that are relevant and fit for purpose."

The trial phase for the new assessment tool was formally launched recently in the South West and the East Midlands. The events were attended by over 150 delegates from industry including employers, Unions and trainers.

The assessments are available now for trial and can be downloaded from www.toolslibrary.co.uk. The supporting materials for tutors can be obtained from www.goskills.org.

New EvoBus GmbH bus and coach service centre in Prague

EvoBus GmbH is investing €4m in a new service centre based in the Czech Republic capital Prague.

Construction work on the project started immediately after a ground-breaking ceremony held last week. It should be operational by August. The new 13,000 square metre site will be the home of EvoBus Bohemia, a subsidiary of EvoBus GmbH. It will house a central service, repair and spare parts outlet for Mercedes-Benz and Setra buses and coaches covering the entire Czech Republic, and is strategically located to routes catering for trans-continental operation. Workshops on the premises will accommodate repair stations for 14 vehicles.

Wolfgang Diez, president and CEO, said: "The new sales and service centre in Prague complements our successful involvement in the production facility in Holysov and represents the cornerstone for a long-term increase in our market share in the Czech Republic."

The addition of the new service centre in Prague creates the 40th EvoBus service centre in Europe. In addition, EvoBus has more than 500 service partners and bus/coach service points in the DaimlerChrysler network. The service spectrum at the EvoBus service centre ranges from general repairs, accident repairs, servicing and maintenance right up to the acquisition of original Omniplus replacement parts and painting work.

Wolfgang Dietz, Evobus president and CEO, centre, turns the first sod on Evobus' new service centre.

EvoBus Bohemia s.r.o. is one of 18 EvoBus subsidiaries in Europe. Formed in 1998 it initially focused on sales and service for Mercedes-Benz and Setra products in the Czech Republic. Later it added production of bus/coach bodyshell segments when in May 1999, it started to manufacture components for the bodyshell centre at Mannheim. Since 2005, front and rear-end segments for the Mercedes-Benz Citaro have also been manufactured there.

Neoplan to build new midi coach in Maribor

TVM of Maribor and Neoplan have signed an agreement to develop and produce a new luxury midi coach in Slovenia.

The vehicle will be marketed by Neoman and as a TVM-badged version in selected territories.TVM general manager Dusan Meznar pointed out that this was not the first time that the two companies had joined forces. A new generation of airport apron buses, built at Maribor, was launched a few years ago and now accounts for a 50% of global sales in this specialist market.

According to Joachim Reinmuth, chairman of Neoplan GmbH, the excellent cooperation with the Slovenian partner had been a major factor in the decision to build the new luxury coach in Maribor. Reinmuth also hinted at other projects likely to introduce TVM into future plans by Neoplan.

TVM, formerly known as TAM /Marbus, has had a turbulent history since its formation in 1947, when it emerged from an aircraft/engine industry established in 1942 by the German occupiers, and then building Magirus-Deutz products. In 2002 the company was acquired by Slovenian logistics group Viator + Vector, based in Ljubljana, which has been able to treble revenue to around €25m this year.TVM is the country's sole producer of buses and specialist trucks.

Indian operator goes national

The near completion of the country's national motorway network has led to the start up of India's first Western-style express coach company. Raj National Express begins with 22 destinations and 96 departures daily with 43 Volvo-chassied coaches, but is aiming at 1,000 buses, 120 destinations and 300 departures by the end of 2007. Raj is oriented towards the business traveller, with 55% of bookings made over the internet, de-seated single deckers carrying 41 passengers, safety belts, check-in lounges, and an emphasis on punctual arrivals and departures. It will roll out more features like airing complete television series on long distance routes, and the ability to pre-book meals at restaurant stops.

Briefly

Sixty-four people were killed in two days of bus accidents in India last week. Thirteen died when a bus fell over 300ft down a gorge in Uttaranchal state – 27 people survived. Fifty-one wedding guests were killed when their bus plunged into a canal in Assam, while just three passengers survived – two of them children – when an overcrowded tour bus plunged nearly 800ft down a ravine in Mexico. Fifty-seven people died.

Yokohama Rubber has announced a new truck and bus tyre manufacturing facility in China. The company has invested USD81m in the factory in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province, and will make 350,000 tyres pa.

Trials of the new smart card system in Perth, Australia has not been without its glitches. Faults like the system not recording that people have disembarked if they do so before the bus comes to a complete stop, and also that the system turns off on the ignition have led to customers being charged the maximum fares. The system will be expanded into the whole of New South Wales later this year, and Victoria in 2007.

A new licensing system which will have a major effect on bus and coach manufacturing in China has been put out for consultation by the government. The system divides the industry into those making buses of over or under 6m, favouring those over 6m, and requires manufacturers to have a high net worth.

The East Canadian Acadian bus company reports improved ridership and revenue after investment from new owners Groupe Orleans Express. Pricing has been revamped, while the company spent $13m upgrading the vehicles with a new livery, and features like laptop power points. The vehicles have also been de-seated.

Regional News

CBW takes a look at the big issues where you live in our round-up of the regions. If you've got a local issue you would like us to cover, contact Andrew Peace at *andrew.peace@rouncymedia.co.uk*

NORTH

Nexus has described its Gold Card – which extends concessionary travel entitlement to the Tyne & Wear Metro system – as an "unqualified success". The card was rapidly developed to help bridge the funding gap brought on by the concessionary travel scheme. For an annual fee of £8 it allows unlimited travel on all public transport in the region after 9.30am on weekdays and all weekend. Around 60,000 pensioners, about one third of those entitled, have bought the card. Tyne & Wear PTA chairman Cllr David Wood says: "The gold card scheme has been a huge success, but there are administrative costs and it is too early to say how the money will be used. We still face a serious budget situation."
The card has raised around £500,000 towards the total budget deficit of £5.4m.

WALES

There was more to the widely-reported story of a pensioner being refused entry to a Cardiff bus than most reports suggested. *CBW* saw articles on the incident – where 71-year-old Brian Heale was refused entry to a Cardiff bus for carrying a pot of paint – from China, the USA and Australia.

The story got a second wind after it was revealed the company was involved in a similar incident last September, with a 79-year-old woman. She was forced to walk two miles home, arriving in a "hell of a state", after a driver would not let her board because she was carrying a tin of paint.

Cardiff Buses describes both incidents as "wholly unacceptable", adding that "more flexibility needs to be displayed", but it has since emerged that in an incident last August a passenger dropped two tins of sealed paint on the floor, causing "extensive" damage and taking the vehicle off the road while it was cleaned.

A spokesman told *CBW*: "Accidents with paint cans do happen on buses, which is why they are included in the UK-wide list of hazardous materials on public transport.

We can, however, assure all passengers that our mission statement and customer care philosophy endeavours to strike a balance between complying with safety regulations and the common sense transportation needs of passengers – especially the elderly."

Briefly

Councillors in Cheshire report a "significant rise" in passenger numbers following the introduction of concessionary travel. Cheshire's scheme covers the whole county, but with half price fares before 9:30am.

Stagecoach East Kent supplemented its service on Easter Monday with some historic vehicles from its predecessor company, the East Kent Road Car Company. The day would have been EKRCC's 90th anniversary. Stagecoach put on the extra services for free. It acquired EKRCC in 1993. The company normally operates with 35 vehicles, and 70 drivers, and says passenger numbers have grown "significantly" over the last few years.

Lancashire Council is acknowledging the limitations of its concessionary travel scheme. Free travel is only available in district areas, but as the council recently withdrew many services it has been forced to allocate an extra £50,000 to support community and rural transport in areas where the existing services are poor or non-existant.

Reading Transport Optare Solo

SOUTH EAST

Reading Transport hit the headlines last week after a mother with a wheelchair-bound child was refused entry to one of its vehicles. The incident has highlighted the issue of what to do when the wheelchair space is occupied by shopping or a pushchair. Bosses admit they are scratching their heads over how to advise their drivers for the future.

The woman tried to board the accessible Optare Solo minibus with her two children, one of whom suffers from cerebral palsy and is confined to a wheelchair. But the wheelchair space was being used to house a non-collapsible push chair and shopping.

Managing director Colin Thompson told *CBW*: "The driver informed the passenger there was no room in as polite a way as he could. Neither of the passengers were willing to move their belongings. It is not strictly speaking correct but you can understand why he did what he did."

Mr Thompson says that the problem is likely to occur more frequently as wheelchair users are already using services in the area on a semi-regular basis, set to increase as low floor vehicles are rolled out in the Reading fleet. It will be 80% accessible by the middle of this year and 100% in the next 18 months.

"It can't just be us with this problem," Mr Thompson says. "We have to be upfront about it and make it clear that the passenger will have to move. We have a duty to say this, and the passengers have a moral obligation

Briefly

Lancashire County Council is looking to cut its transport budget by nearly a third, to £3.5m, and is examining its non-statutory school bus services for savings. The council blames the cuts on rising fuel costs, but an opposition spokesman says: "Axeing these buses is madness. It's a monumental mistake. It undermines more than two decades of work to boost public transport."

Smart card technology could provoke a revolution at registration in schools. Education authorities in London are investigating the possibility of expanding the scheme to include an Oyster card reader at school entrances that would automatically log pupils as attending school. A text message would then be sent to parents informing them of their child's arrival.

Engineers and cleaners at First PMT in Staffordshire are to strike over pay. Sixty two workers began an overtime ban last Friday, and will strike for a week from April 28 to May 4. The 43 engineers are reportedly seeking pay and conditions parity with colleagues in other First PMT locations.

Bristol's Rubicon Classic Travel's new I K Brunel-decorated Metrobus open topper

to move. The difficulty is to do it without causing offence to anybody."

Reading's drivers are currently being put through a refresher course on disability awareness.

A joyrider who stole a coach from an operator in Surrey last week caused £25,000 damage to parked cars.

The unidentified male youth, seen running away from the abandoned vehicle, stole the coach from **Watsons Coaches** in Redhill. The coach, a Leyland Tiger used for school services, started by switch. The other two Tigers in Watsons 10 strong fleet have now been converted to key ignition.

Despite the fact that the thief managed to start the vehicle and was able to drive it, owner Paul Watson told *CBW* that he does not think it was a qualified driver who took the coach.

After careering down a narrow residential road, and damaging up to 20 parked cars, the coach crashed into roadworks. It then hit cars on a dealer's forecourt, shunting one through the showroom window. The coach was abandoned shortly afterwards but is in too bad a condition to repair.

The firm is keen to downplay the incident, fearing the consequences if it becomes generally known that many older coaches do not need keys to start. Another Watson's vehicle was also damaged as the stolen coach was driven off, but was repaired on site and is now back on the road.

A pensioner in **Hertfordshire**, who has been campaigning for free travel for 16 years, welcomes the scheme but is calling for more low floor buses in the county. Terry Hutt, of Royston Pensioners Action Group, says: "It's a victory to finally get these bus passes. The unfortunate part is that we've got a lack of transport in Hertfordshire. Many people living in the outskirts of the towns and in villages have not got a bus running through. There are many disabled and elderley people who can't climb on the older buses, it stops people from traveling. We need the drop platform buses." Hertfordshire offers an unrestricted all-day countywide scheme.

EAST

School bus fees in **Suffolk** are set to rise by 22% from September, leading many local parents considering clubbing together to send their children to school by car. A typical charge per term will increase from £92 to £112.

One parent was quoted as saying: "It is becoming cheaper for parents to group together to use one car between several families, rather than use the buses. It seems completely at odds with what the government is trying to do." A council spokeswoman says: "This year's increase was higher due to the budget savings the council had to find due to a poor settlement from the government this year." Suffolk subsidise school bus journeys by 30%.

The Crossville Centenary Group, among whom number many high profile figures in the bus industry, are holding a Centenary Day Celebration on April 30th in Rhyl. The rally of Crosville buses and coaches will start in the presence of local MP Chris Ruane, a former Crossville employee. Bob Hind, managing director of Arriva North West and Wales, whose career started with Crosville, will speak at the Celebration Dinner. Phone Duncan Roberts on 0114 230 3282 for more details.

Roadworks

M74 Hamilton
Until May 12: Contraflow and roadworks on M74 both ways at J5 A725 (Raith Interchange).

M8 Renfrewshire
Until May 10: Slip road onto motorway closed and delays expected due to bridge maintenance work on M8 Eastbound at J28 (Glasgow Airport).

M90 Fife
Until May 1: Narrow lanes southbound at J1 A921 / A985 (Admiralty).

M56 Cheshire
Until April 30: Lane closed on exit slip road westbound at J7 A556 (Bowdon).

M6 Staffordshire
Until June 30: Speed restriction of 40 mph due to resurfacing work on M6 Northbound between J12 A5 (Gailey) and J13 A449 (Stafford South).

M1 Hertfordshire
Until December 31, 2008: Speed restriction of 40 mph and narrow lanes both ways between J6A M25 and J10 M1 (Luton Airport).

M11 Cambridgeshire
Until May 1: Speed restriction of 40 mph due to resurfacing work and contraflow on M11 both ways between J9 A11 (Newmarket Turnoff) and J8 A120 / A1250 / B1256 (Stansted Airport / Bishops Stortford).

M4 South Gloucestershire
Between 2100 and 0530 until April 27: Roadworks during the night and barrier repairs on M4 both ways at J20 M5 (Almondsbury Interchange/M5).

M48 South Gloucestershire
Between 0930 and 1600 until April 30: Lane closed and speed restriction of 40 mph both ways at J1 A403 / B4461 (Aust).

M5 North Somerset
Until July 31: Speed restriction both ways between J19 A369 (Portishead) and J20 B3133 (Clevedon).

A39 Somerset
Until May 21: Road closed due to roadworks on A39 both ways between B3135 and A37.

In association with
trafficlink
www.trafficlink.co.uk

Win tickets to see Lipizzaner Stallions

The renowned Lipizzaner Stallions are back in Britain to celebrate their 36th anniversary tour and *CBW* is offering one lucky operator the chance to win up to £600 worth of tickets to a performance by these stunning white dancing stallions.

The show features up to 16 horses in a programme that combines new choreography, amazing routines and classical horsemanship. Many of the stallions are from the famed Spanish Riding School in Vienna.

The anniversary tour kicks off at the Birmingham NEC on Saturday May 6 at 7.30pm but we are offering coach operators to chance to win five family tickets to one of the later shows of their choice. Each family ticket admits four people and is worth up to £120 so an operator could add another 20 paying customers and get a coach load of 40 for the show.

You can see the Lipizzaner Stallions at these venues:

- **Press and Journal Arena,** Aberdeen, Wednesday May 17, 7.30pm
- **Braehead Arena, Glasgow,** Friday, May 19, 7.30pm
- **Brighton Centre,** Wednesday, May 24, 7.30pm
- **Wembley Arena,** Saturday, May 27, 2pm
- **Hallam FM Arena,** Sheffield, Thursday, June 1, 7.30pm
- **Nottingham Arena,** Saturday, June 3, 7.30pm
- **Bournemouth International Centre,** Tuesday, June 6, 7.30pm
- **Cardiff International Arena,** Saturday, June 10, 2pm
- **Odyssey Arena, Belfast,** Friday, June 16, 7.30pm

For a chance to win the tickets, just answer this simple question:

Lipizzaner Stallions are from the Spanish Riding School in which European city?

Send your answer on a postcard or sealed envelope, together with name and address and daytime telephone contact number and preferred show date to:

White Horse Contest, Coach & Bus Week, Rouncy Media, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Peterborough PE7 8FD.

■ The closing date is Friday May 5 and the first correct entry drawn after that date will win. The winning tickets are valid only for the first day performance at each venue. Tickets for the shows range from £24.50 to £32.50 for adults and there is a £3 discount for senior citizens and children.
■ For full details of the tour and group bookings call 0870 735 5100 or go to *www.bookingsdirect.com* (booking fee may apply).

Sluggish start to the year for cross-Channel operators

Both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel have recorded falls in coach traffic volume in the early months of the year, perhaps another indication that the battle for business is going to be just as fierce on the short-sea routes as in recent years.

Eurotunnel, which remains beset by debt problems, carried 12,858 coaches in the first three months of 2006 compared to 17,629 in the 2005 first quarter, which is a hefty 27% reduction. However, such a like for like comparison is skewed due to the timing of Easter and because of the disruption at the port of Calais in early 2005. This caused severe disruptions to ferry services and Eurotunnel gained considerable additional business.

So perhaps it would be more realistic to compare 2006 and 2004 traffic figures. In this case Eurotunnel recorded an 8% increase over traffic two years ago when it carried 11,867 coaches.

The revenue from shuttle activities dipped by 1% compared to 2005 as a result of the Calais effect but the Channel Tunnel operator said that the new commercial policies adopted in 2005 enabled it to compensate for the drop in volume.

Just down the road in Dover, the ferry operators recorded a 21.5% drop in coach traffic in the first month of the year. A total of 3,544 vehicles sailed away compared to 4,516 coaches in 2005 but then January traditionally is a poor month for travel as the Christmas hangover bites and the rain tends to lash down on both sides of the Channel. However, there was a glint of light in February when 5,432 coaches left these shores, a 3.5% increase on the 5,249 figure for 2005.

Mapping out the way to Potteries

Stoke-on-Trent Tourism is keen to attract more coach business to the Potteries and has incorporated several coach maps in its 2006 group travel guide. The maps are in a separate A4 brochure in a flap in the inside back of the 24-page guide and highlight coach parking, factory shops and attractions in the six towns that comprise the conurbation of Stoke-on-Trent.

This month also sees the launch of a Coach Driver's Passport that will feature a free membership privilege scheme for coaches.

Coaches are encouraged in the Potteries

Another innovation sees a 'New 06' stamp in the main guide that highlights the latest visitor attractions. These include Trentham Monkey Forest, Moorcroft Heritage Visitor Centre, Tutbury Crystal Glass Visitor Centre, Moorcroft Factory Shop, Churchill Factory Shops and a family entertainment centre at Waterworld.

Trentham Monkey Forest is the only place in Britain where visitors can see 160 Barbary Macaques roaming free in 60 acres of forest, while the arrival of Tutbury Crystal heralds a major new visitor attraction. After producing crystal in the Staffordshire town of Tutbury for more than 500 years, the company has relocated to the Montrose Works in Fenton and opens its doors this month.

■ Accommodation, meal stops and full details of all support services in the area are also featured in the guide. Copies may be obtained by contacting Julie Obada or Sam Riley on 01782 232701 or email: tourism@stoke.gov.uk

Full bloom: This spring feast your eyes on over a million bulbs at Cornwall's Eden Project

Mad about bulbs in Cornwall

It is been a seemingly never-ending winter but operators looking to bring a bit of colour into the lives of groups should head for the Eden Project in Cornwall, where Bulb Mania is in full bloom.

Now in its third year, Eden's spring festival comprises more than a million bulbs being added in succession. After daffodils in March and tulips in April, it is the turn of lilies in May.

Bulb Mania sits well alongside the magnolias, rhododendrons and camellias of the woodland gardens and showpieces this year include a river of grape hyacinths sweeping along the link roof between Eden's two Biomes - the biggest conservatories in the world.

The Eden Project is open daily from 10am to 6pm (last admissions 4.30pm) until October 29 and there is extended evening opening during the summer holidays. Entry for groups of 10 or more is £11 for adults, £8 for senior citizens and ú4 for children from five to 15.

Coach drivers qualify for free admission, a £5 refreshment voucher and a 10% discount in the gift shop. They also may use the facilities in the purpose-built drivers' lounge. Coach parking is free and the coach park has a payable coach wash-down area and toilet drop.

■ For bookings and more information, contact Carol Barrett, the Group Bookings Co-ordinator, on 01726 811903 or email: *CBarrett@EdenProject.com*

Taking a special interest in Ireland

A party of 36 group organisers have been taking the air on a four-day educational to the south-eastern corner of Ireland run by Johnsons Coach Travel of Henley-in-Arden.

The tour was organised by Action Tours, the Ireland specialist wholesaler, with assistance from Tourism Ireland and the itinerary included Waterford and the Wicklow Mountains. It proved a success with all members of the party, one of whom said: "Everyone conspired to offer the best in accommodation, places of interest and guided tours but above all to make each one of us feel welcome."

Linda Roberts, managing director of Action Tours said: "Social clubs and private groups are a huge growth area for the coach market and Johnsons already has an established core of group organisers. In a very short space of time our aim was to introduce Ireland and there is no doubt that first-hand experience always pays dividends."

Rob Kingscott, Johnsons' sales and marketing manager, said that he had received positive feedback from the trip and was confident of that being turned into confirmed bookings next year.

Clean air on SeaFrance fleet

Independent ferry operator SeaFrance has introduced a no-smoking policy in all internal passenger areas across its fleet of five vessels.

Robin Wilkins, managing director of SeaFrance, said: "The company has reviewed its smoking policy in response to passenger demand and increased concerns for public health. All interior passenger spaces across the fleet now operate a non-smoking policy. Passengers who wish to smoke may do so in designated areas on the outside deck."

The move by SeaFrance comes hot on the heels of the announcement by the government of next year's total ban on smoking in public areas in England. A similar ban came into effect in Scotland on March 26.

Events

April 25/27 (Today!): CV Show, NEC, Birmingham. *www.cvshow.com*

May 4: Employee Motivation and Incentives, conference, CBI Conference Centre, London. *www.symposium-events.co.uk*

May 8-10: ALBUM Conference, Cardiff. Karen Stafford-Smith 029 2078 7700.

May 9-13: Motortec automotive show, IFEMA, Madrid, Spain. *www.motorteconline.com*, +34 91 722 3000

May 11: DDA 2005 and Public Transport: Myth and Reality, conference, Sadlers Wells, London. Book online at *www.thewaterfront.co.uk*

May 17-18: Coach Tourism 2006, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. *www.coachtourism.com*, 0870 3892903

May 21-28: CPT Study Tour, Singapore/Kuala Lumpur. Details: 0207 240 3131

June 15: Unintended Accelerations Accidents Seminar, Whitehouse Hotel, Kegworth, Derbyshire. Reducing 'bus surge' incidents. Call 0115 937 6868, or email *dean.southall@btconnect.com*

September 9-10: 40th Anniversary Bus Driver of the Year, Blackpool. 0161 427 5986. *www.bdoy.co.uk*

September 28-29: Group Leisure and Travel Show, NEC, Birmingham. Call 01908 613323, or visit *www.leisureshow.com*

November 6-9: World Travel Market, ExCel, London. *www.wtmlondon.com*

November 7-9: Euro Bus Expo, NEC. 0870 224 8619, *eurobusxpo@expom.co.uk*

November 14-17: FIAA '06 Exhibition (bus and coach), Madrid, Spain. +34 91 722 5000, http://www.ifema.es/ferias/fiaa/default.html

Reputation saved by timely action

A Darlington-based minibus operator's actions in addressing maintenance issues resulted in his reputation remaining intact

A long-established taxi operator, which expanded into minibus operation less than two years ago, escaped with little more than a minor censure, after appearing at a public inquiry to explain picking up three 'S' marked prohibitions in less than three months, last year. United Taxis of Darlington gained a standard national licence on November 8, 2004, in order to employ larger minibuses alongside its standard private hire cars.

Deputy Traffic Commissioner Miss Elizabeth Perrett told proprietor Michael Wilson, that she was satisfied with his explanations, and impressed by his current endeavours. She said that no more than a formal warning was needed, as good systems were now in place. She concluded that the Transport Manager's repute was slightly tarnished (or as she put it – a bit grubby).

United Taxis (Contracts) Limited, trading as United Taxis of Gladstone Street, Darlington, faced a public inquiry at Hillcrest House, Leeds, to consider disciplinary action on its standard national licence for eight vehicles, resulting from unsatisfactory maintenance investigation and prohibition notices. Consideration of the Transport Manager's repute was also on the agenda.

Vehicle Examiner Geoffrey Flatters, based at the VOSA enforcement office in Darlington, presented a report describing an unannounced maintenance investigation at the company's premises on October 4, when one vehicle was examined and issued with a defect notice for a minor defect. He also described a fleet inspection on July 7, when two vehicles were examined and both issued with S marked prohibitions.

He said that vehicle S757 NEF had one of six wheel nuts loose on the front offside. An excessively corroded brake component on the hand brake lever mounting point on the floor and another corroded component on the floor cross member mounting point. In addition the door holding device was ineffective, meaning that the front nearside door could not stay open.

Also inspected was vehicle S509 NFT, which had a defective seat belt on the second row, where the webbing was cut and holed. A retaining device connecting the handbrake rod to yoke pin was missing, and two brake pipes were corroded, deeply pitted and weakened.

In addition a third vehicle R493 GWU received an immediate prohibition during its annual test examination, for an insecure suspension component, where there was a nut missing from the suspension mounting bolt on the nearside front axle.

Mr Flatters said than a review of safety inspection records showed that the six week frequency was being adhered to, although one inspection sheet was missing, and that the drivers written defect reporting system appeared to be operating satisfactorily, as reports were endorsed with defect and rectification action. He said that the maintenance facilities at the company's premises included a wheels free hoist, in a weather proof building, with one skilled member of staff and one apprentice being employed.

He concluded that the accumulation of three S marked prohibitions indicated a significant failure in the maintenance system, and a failure to comply with a declaration that all vehicles would be maintained in a fit and roadworthy condition at all times.

> **"Sixty per cent involved sensible people and 40% was 'getting drunks home'"**

Cross-examined by Jonathan Backhouse, Mr Flatters agreed that the company had learnt from advice given, and that the issue was one of quality control of the output. He said that he had spoken to the engineer who suggested that the MOT failure may have been caused by some interference from an employee, and that the cut seatbelt may have been snagged by the sliding door. He said that at his first maintenance investigation, he had suggested that the fitter could obtain a copy of the PSV maintenance guide to maintaining roadworthiness.

Giving evidence for the company, director Michael Wilson said that they had been operating private hire taxis for over 20 years, and he was one of the largest operators in Darlington, because he owned all the taxis, rather than other businesses, where owner drivers used their own. He said that there was a demand for larger vehicles and he moved into 14 seaters on a restricted licence, first one for his son, and then one for his wife. Having become successful, he applied for an O licence, and six vehicles were being operated, two on daytime contracts, and the rest in the evenings on pre-booked private hire duties.

He said that maintenance on taxis was always done in house, but PMIs on minibuses were done by a sub-

> **The Transport Manager's repute is slightly tarnished, in fact... a little bit grubby**

contractor. "Darlington Council insists on checking taxis twice a year, and our pass rate is one of the best in the Darlington area," he said. "As we expanded, we found that the sub-contractors could not always fit our vehicles in according to the schedules, so we decided to do all the work ourselves."

Most of the daytime work involved transporting Social Services and disabled groups and two new vehicles were used. Sixty per cent of the taxi work involved sensible people, and forty per cent was a "getting drunks home service" hence the vehicles used were not particularly new.

Regarding the prohibitions accumulated, Mr Wilson said that he had never got to the bottom of the cause for the missing suspension nut, but the suspicion was that it may have been removed deliberately to settle a personal vendetta. After the first two prohibitions, he said that he had introduced a more structured system for managing the paperwork, and the introduction of more intermediate checks. "Since the prohibitions, we are now replacing components on a mileage basis, rather than waiting for them to show signs of wear and tear. Items like brake pipes and suspension bushes, which might look OK are now being replaced, rather than waiting for a mechanic's opinion."

He said that maintenance staff were interviewed, and he felt that the workshop maintenance programme needed updating. One member of staff was going to a VOSA three-day course, and the apprentice, who had nearly completed his four-year apprenticeship, would be the next. He said that he had even invited Mr Flatters to make a random inspection recently, but this had been declined.

Mr Wilson confirmed that he was spending more time with his transport manager on checking maintenance, and he was also concerned that drivers performed all their walk-round checks. He suggested that one way forward would be to have an independent audit of two vehicles twice a year, to encourage maintenance to be thorough. He also suggested trying random checks on his drivers, by trying to catch them out during their walk-round inspections by substituting dead light bulbs and such, to see if they were detected.

"We have learnt by our mistakes" said Mr Wilson, "and they should not have happened, but our maintenance regime has developed since then."

Summing up, Mr Backhouse suggested the adoption of two undertakings, firstly to have an unannounced audit of maintenance covering at least two vehicles twice a year, and secondly to have random audits of the drivers' walk round checks at least every three weeks. "This is a quality control issue, and the operator has been let down, but is now well up the learning curve," he said.

Delivering her verdict Miss Perrett said that the history of the events did not seem like something that could have been foreseen and nipped in the bud, nor was there a long run of prohibitions. Accepting the two undertakings that were offered, she said that she was impressed by Mr Wilson's recent endeavours.

"This case does not warrant regulatory action," she said. "Nothing more than a formal warning is needed, as good systems are now in place.

"The Transport Manager's repute is slightly tarnished, in fact I would say a little bit grubby."

Other decisions

WESTERN

Bristol, February 28, 2006
Brijan Tours Ltd, Southampton
*** PSV - S17 - Formal warning in respect of maintenance**

EASTERN

Cambridge, March 24, 2006
Christopher Butler T/A Spotlight Travel, Haddenham
*** PSV - S17 - No action**

Cambridge, March 24, 2006
Gary Tunstall T/A Arena Niteliners, Somersham Huntingdon
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for**

Cambridge, March 24, 2006
Amberleaf Transport Ltd, Hounslow
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted for three vehicles. An undertaking was given to the Traffic Commissioner that Parmjit Duley would become a director of the company within 14 days.**

NORTH EASTERN

Leeds, April 3, 2006
Trevor Harold Cooper And Daniel Francis Craggs T/A First Choice Travel, Stanley
*** PSV - S17 - Licence revoked with effect from 23.59hrs April 10, 2006**

Leeds, April 3, 2006
Coopers Executive Travel Ltd, Houghton Le Spring
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for - SI 1 vehicle**

NORTH WESTERN

Warrington, March 21, 2006
Susan Zamir, Adlincote DE11 8JD
*** PSV - S14 - Application granted with conditions. Undertakings recorded.**

SCOTTISH

Aberdeen, November 25, 2005
William George & Georgina Robertson T/A W G & G Robertson Cuminestown, Turriff
*** PSV - S16 - Application refused**
*** PSV - S17 - No action**

SOUTH EAST AND METROPOLITAN

Eastbourne, March 28, 2006
Derek & Linda Smith T/A A Plus Buses, Dartford
*** PSV - S17 - Licence revoked with effect from 23.59 hrs on April 23, 2006.**

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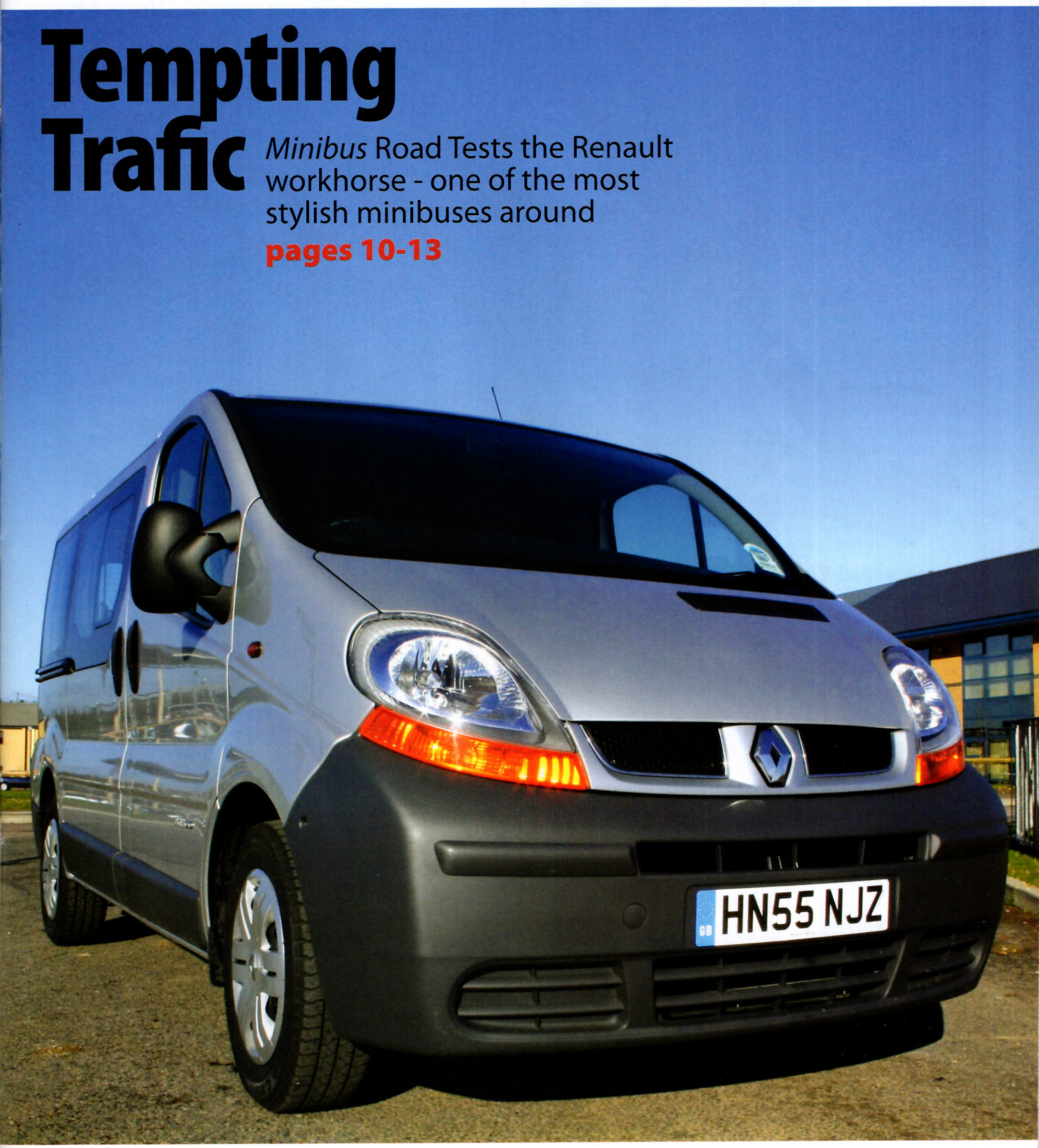

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Swings and roundabouts

Operators thinking of upgrading or updating can expect some cracking deals on panel vans or chassis cowls/cabs for conversions in the run-up to new models being introduced by all the main manufacturers.

It has always been a concern to dealerships and distributors, that the changeover to a new model will leave them with unsold older models - and this year there are new models coming forward on a scale never seen before. If the deals aren't being advertised now, you can bet they soon will be and it could save some people a lot of money.

Conversely, those that choose to hang on and make their changes coincide with the latest styling and technology will have to pay more - but gain the kudos associated with being among the first to run the new models.

There are signs this is already happening and having a marked effect on third-party suppliers. An acquaintance in the seat manufacturing trade tells me business has been dropping off and, he is told by his customers, that operators are hanging on for the new Sprinter/Crafter/LDV/Transit/Boxer/Relay/Ducato/Master/Movano/Interstar/Daily - or whatever.

Although many are claiming the arrival of new models and the clearance of older ones is just like 'swings and roundabouts' which will balance out nicely, in practice there are those who will suffer in the interim period as cash flows dwindle.

Don't forget, if you operate minibuses which require a tachograph, from May 1, 2006 it will be a mandatory requirement that all new vehicles registered on or after that date will need to be fitted with a digital tachograph.

Additionally, all drivers likely to use a new vehicle with a digital tachograph must have the new 'driver cards' or they will not be allowed to drive it at all.

Martin Cole
Editor

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CBW Minibus is published by Rouncy Media, First Floor, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

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TVAC buys Driveline after investment deal

TVAC - The Vehicle Application Centre, one of the UK's leading commercial vehicle converters and fire appliance manufacturers, has secured a strategic investment from Venture Private Equity Ltd, a private investment firm specialising in companies experiencing rapid growth.

Based at Leyland, TVAC says it is experiencing very high sales growth and is implementing aggressive plans to continue expansion of the business during the next year and beyond. In January the company was awarded a large order to build 110 Fire Appliances for the London Fire Brigade via AssetCo. TVAC designs, manufactures, and supports a fleet of over 250 fire appliances, 10,000 special commercial vehicle conversions and 100 buses across the UK.

Gary Smith, owner and managing director, said he recognised the challenges facing the business, from both financial and management viewpoints, and was keen to identify a strategic partner. The introduction of the financial and management resources of Venture Private Equity Ltd fitted TVAC's requirements and Stephen Moon of Venture will become the new chief executive officer and his team are now working alongside Gary, who will dedicate more of his time to the expanding 'Blue Light' side of TVAC.

Venture and TVAC have also announced the acquisition of minibus converter Driveline. Driveline products will now form part of TVAC Passenger Vehicles Ltd and will compliment TVAC's previous acquisition of Swain Bus & Coach Ltd in May last year. Mr Smith said this was an extremely exciting time for the company and it would be making further announcements on the introduction of products in the coming months.

TVAC will now divide its operations into three focussed business units: TVAC Blue Light for Fire Appliances and other emergency vehicles, TVAC Passenger Vehicles for bus manufacture and TVAC Special Vehicle Engineering for vehicle conversions. In addition to establishing a sound financial platform and management restructuring,

TVAC bought Swaine Bus & Coach in May 2005

the company is seeking to secure a 50,000 sq ft factory in addition to its current premises to cope with expansion of production activities

Gary Smith commented: "TVAC has been consistently profitable since its formation in 1993. It is now experiencing tremendous growth and it was time to call in some help to assist with growing the business to its next stage and beyond."

New chief executive Stephen Moon said: "We are delighted with our investment in TVAC. The team at Venture have an excellent suite of skills to assist with the challenges facing what now amounts to a two-year and fast growing order book".

TVAC was formed in 1993 by MD Gary Smith to provide chassis conversion and re-engineering facilities for commercial vehicles. In 1996 TVAC began to design and manufacture fire appliances and has become the UK market leader. TVAC is also sole UK agent for Plastisol, whose composite bodies are fast becoming the benchmark for fire engines worldwide. In 2001 TVAC moved into a purpose built factory, purchased rival chassis engineering and conversion specialist Drinkwater Engineering along with Mercedes converter ICE. In 2004 TVAC gained the North West Business of the year title. TVAC is now building complete lowfloor tri-axle minibuses which are also finding uses as mobile banks, internet and training vehicles, mobile libraries and patient transport services.

Renault improves aftercare network

Renault is continuing to strengthen its Van Service Centre network in the UK.

The current organisation with 39 centres is being strengthened by a further 11 and there could well be more than 50 by the end of this year. All the sites are operated by established Renault dealers and the new ones will appear in key areas such as South Wales and north east England. Their creation will create up to 12 jobs per site, depending on size and location.

In addition to caring for Renault fleet and owner/operator customers, the sites will also cater for servicing and support of other makes. The aim is to ensure customers with van-based Renault products can receive next-day servicing by specialist technicians and, in some instances and by arrangement, a replacement vehicle, extended servicing hours and collection and delivery service.

■ Details on www.renault.co.uk or call 0800 072 3372.

VW Crafter: launches in September

VW launch Crafter website

Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles has launched a customer website dedicated to the new Crafter van, which will go on sale in September.

By visiting www.newcrafter.co.uk, operators can keep up to date with the latest information, browse specification details and register their interest in the new Crafter by subscribing to a newsletter which will deliver news and updates via email.

The site will be developed over the coming months and will include, among other details, information from the world public debut at this week's CV Show at the NEC.

Crafter is scheduled for launch in September and sets high standards in safety, technology and driver comfort. The range will be one of the most comprehensive on the market; from the three basic gross vehicle weights of 3.0, 3.5 and 5.0 tonnes, the line-up can stretch and adapt to include 2.8, 3.2, 3.8, 4.0, 4.25, 4.49 and 4.6 tonne versions.

Crafter also offer flexibility in volume - culminating in the long wheelbase, extended overhang and super-high roof version which can carry up to 17 cubic metres. The total length of the new Crafter ranges from 5.2 to 7.3 metres, while width (minus wing mirrors) is 1.99 metres.

They are powered by newly-developed 2.5-litre diesel engines producing a range of outputs from 88 bhp to 163 bhp. The engines have been designed to ensure they are suitable for power 'take-offs', making the Crafter ideal for conversions in the light commercial sector.

■ Visit www.newcrafter.co.uk or for the latest details on the Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles range, visit www.volkswagen-vans.co.uk , alternatively call 0800 717131.

Allied Vehicles' new 17-seater Iveco Daily. The vehicle can provide capacity for up to six wheelchairs and a Ratcliff Palfinger tail-lift

MiDAS training for Allied staff

The whole of the Allied Vehicles' minibus sales team has successfully completed the MiDAS driver training programme. The initiative comes as part of Allied's on-going commitment to product knowledge training for the specialist needs of the minibus sector.

MiDAS, the minibus driver awareness scheme, is organised by the Community Transport Association (CTA) and helps to improve minibus safety by working with organisations to enhance driving skills and increase passenger awareness.

Gerry O'Donnell, Allied's local Driver Assessor Trainer (DAT) for North Area Transport Association (NATA) provided practical tuition and Brian Hill of Lothian Community Transport Services delivered the theoretical work prior to the examination.

Lorna Miller, Allied Vehicles minibus sales manager, commented: "The specialised training associated with operating wheelchair accessible minibuses is particularly important to us because all our minibuses can be adapted to provide access for people with disabilities. We're always looking for ways to improve our understanding of customers' needs and I believe there's no substitute for knowing how to do the job yourself."

The Allied vehicles team show off their MiDAS driver training certificates

Allied Vehicles launch Iveco flat-floor

Working in partnership with Iveco, Allied Vehicles have launched a new flat floor 17-seater Iveco Daily.

Accessible for up to six wheelchairs, the Daily has the option of a plug door or a side sliding door and Ratcliff Palfinger rear tail-lift. Allied Vehicles' adaptation of this three litre model was first seen at the last Community Transport Event in Manchester.

Allied Vehicles has a growing range of minibuses designed to increase accessibility throughout the UK. Every model can be adapted for wheelchair users and many are available with Unwin Innotrax specially tracked flooring for maximum safety and flexibility. Each vehicle is carefully adapted to a high specification and features a range of wheelchair restraint systems, ramps and tail-lifts.

Marques in its range include Renault, Fiat, Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot, Iveco, Citroen and Volkswagen.

"We've had lots of positive feedback from our customers who appreciate the high quality workmanship and specification of our minibuses," said Lorna Miller, national sales manager.

The company prides itself on its aftersales customer care service.

The company offer a five-year unlimited mileage warranty and have an exclusive three years free service package.

■ For more information call 0800 916 3007 or visit www.alliedvehicles.co.uk /bus

New Ford Transit makes its world debut at this week's CV show at the NEC

New Transit breaks cover this week

The Ford stand at this year's Commercial Vehicle (CV) Show at the NEC, Birmingham (25-27 April), will be a centre of attraction for many visitors as the new Transit breaks cover for its official launch.

Transit remains Britain's most popular van, and the latest changes, the most significant for six years, are designed to keep it firmly ahead of the pack. The vehicle's fresh exterior styling underlines that this is a thoroughly contemporary commercial vehicle.

Key features on the new Transit include a dashboard-mounted gearshift, disc brakes all-round and ABS as standard, a redesigned dash with extra storage space, boosted front-axle capacity, twin batteries and a completely new range of Euro IV- compliant TDCi diesel engines.

Further refinements set to redefine the term "van" include a coded locking system with rechargeable waterproof ignition fob and the option of fitting a Bluetooth kit, cruise control, satellite navigation and leather trim.

The changes are far reaching and set new standards, but do they go far enough to rival the highly specified and extensively revised Mercedes Sprinter and Volkswagen Crafter - both also having the lid publicly lifted at the same venue. We've already seen what Sprinter has to offer. If the Ford is going to maintain its lead it will have to be good... very, very good.

Immediately following the public launch, Ford is hosting a ride and drive for journalists. You'll get our verdict on its development and performance in the next issue of Minibus at the end of May.

Community Transport scheme plea for members

The organisers of an innovative Salisbury-based transport scheme, which pairs up community groups with unused minibuses, is urging more people to get involved.

The initiative, promoted by Salisbury District Community Transport, seeks groups with access to minibuses which are not fully utilised, such as schools, sporting clubs or scout groups. Vehicles will be put into a pool where groups could make use of their downtime, for a fee.

The contribution towards the use of the vehicle could then be used towards maintaining or even adding to the supplier's fleet.

A spokesperson for SDCT said: "The idea behind the scheme is to provide groups with the use of cost-effective transport without the hassle of having to raise funds for their own vehicle. We co-ordinate the journey bookings and ensure the highest standards are kept when the vehicles are being borrowed.

"Trained drivers can also be provided for groups that don't have their own."

SDCT asks any organisations with minibuses and community groups to join in the scheme. Call them on 01722 414566 or e-mail Salisbury-ct@btconnect.com

Brecon deliveries

Recently formed Brecon Coachworks has commenced deliveries of new accessible vehicles - its first having left the factory before the end of March.

The business is based in Brecon's Enterprise Park and was established with the assistance of the Welsh Development Agency. It is the brainchild of John Wiggins, of Stanford Coachworks, and Peter Andow.

Mr Andow said: "We began talking about setting up something together 18 months ago. Brecon Coachworks was a year in the planning and we started getting everything together in the last half of 2005.

"Currently we have five of us on the management, sales and administration side and two vehicle converters. We sent them down to Stanford Coachworks to be trained and we are hoping to send a couple more very shortly. Our plans are to build up steadily to eight production staff by the end of this year."

Brecon Coachworks occupies a new 6,000 square feet facility and is actively engaged in tendering for business. Its second vehicle order, also an Irisbus conversion, has just been confirmed and is for a small Welsh community group.

Driver dies after collision

An 18-year old car driver died on March 30 after colliding with a school minibus carrying 14 children.

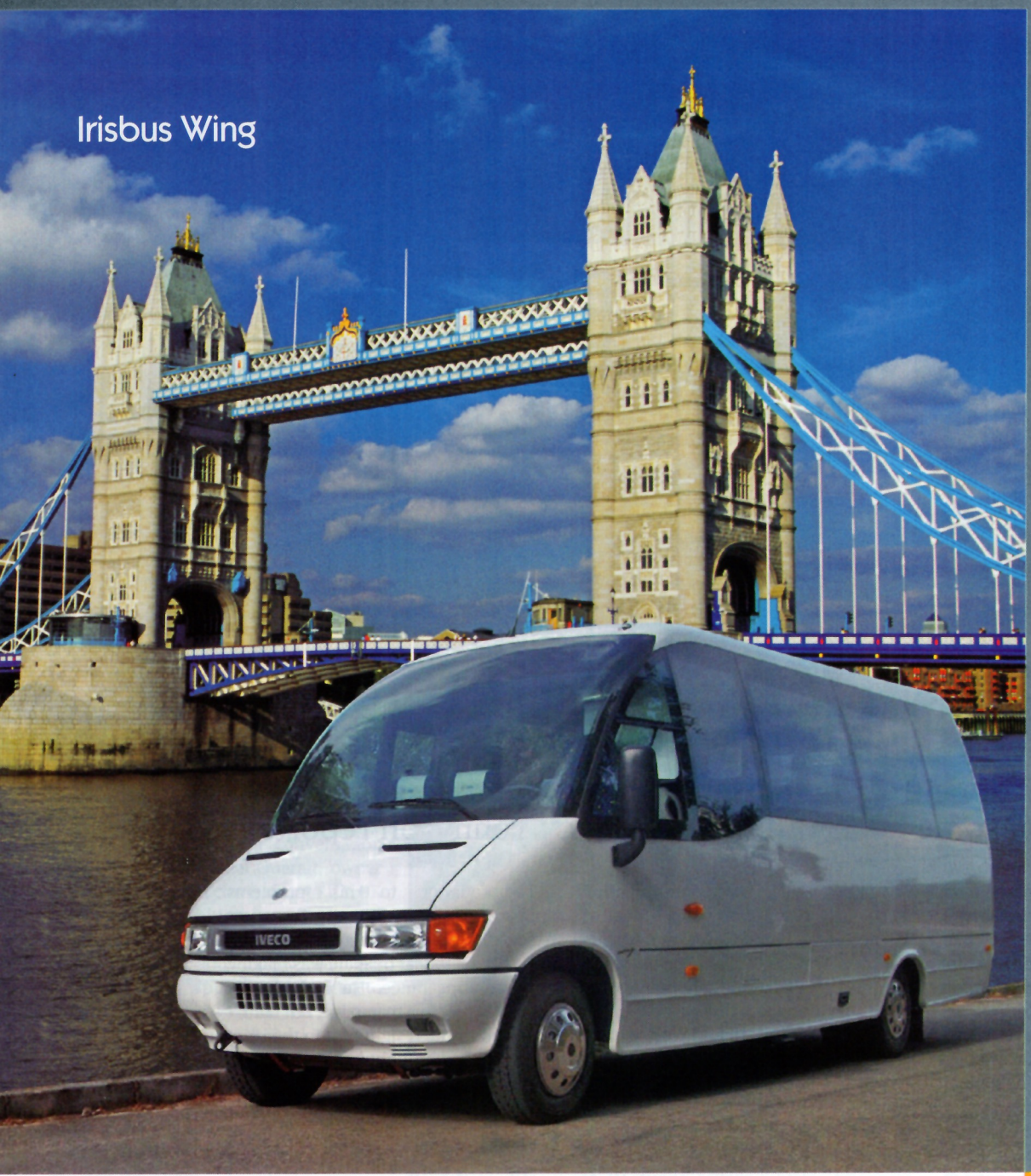
The accident happened at lunchtime on the A55 near Llanfairpwll on Anglesey. The minibus from Aberffraw school was carrying pupils aged between eight and 11 years, along with two female teachers. They were travelling to Penrhyn Castle on an educational visit.

All the passengers had been wearing seatbelts and none were injured, although one child was sent to hospital for a check-up.

Two days earlier five people were taken to hospital following a collision between a minibus and a car. The incident closed the M20 in Kent.

Daily Luxury Redefined

Irisbus - safety and comfort driven by design



Within five short years Irisbus has become one of the major manufacturers of Buses and Coaches in the world. A wealth of experience, inherited over years of specialising in passenger vehicles, has given Irisbus a pedigree to be envied.

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Spreading Wings

Keep Mobile has done the rounds with accessible minibuses, and finally settled on some luxury from Spain. Lucy Tennyson reports

Luxury travel by coach has long been distinct from the concept of bus travel. Regular journeys are made by bus, but if you want comfort and room for luggage for longer trips, it's the comfort that a coach can offer you need.

But what of minibus travel? Take for example, a blind group or disabled club going out for the day - how much comfort does a minibus offer?

The answer from one (community transport) operator Keep Mobile in Wokingham, is clear: "Not enough. Accessible minibuses are generally based on van conversions - and I can't stand what I regard as converted bread vans," says Fred Rule, chair of the CT's management committee.

"We run a lot of outings for our members, and most of them are disabled and wheelchair users. They should have what we all can expect when we travel by coach, that feeling of a quality vehicle offering a comfortable ride, and good views from the windows."

Keep Mobile is a community transport organisation which has been in operation since early 1992. It operates a fleet of 10 accessible minibuses, the Irisbus Dailybus, which ideally fit the bill when it comes to dial-a-ride, shopping trips and other transport duties around the boroughs of Bracknell and Wokingham.

But another major feature of the charity's work is the regular outings, which vary from 'fish and chip' socials, to day trips down to the coast, a couple of hours away. The community transport scheme makes about 10 of these excursions a month, which are extremely popular among the scheme's 6,000 members.

Keep Mobile needs to use a 16-seater vehicle, to allow it to operate under the Section 19 Permit system. And while the Dailybus is fine for shorter journeys, it does not have the room or luxury feel that a larger coach would offer. Keep Mobile had for a long time used Mercedes Varios for their outings, but Fred says he found they didn't have the comfort and reliability he required.

The answer to his problems appeared at the Community Transport Association's exhibition at GMEX in 2004, where Indcar of Spain was making its first appearance. He had already seen the Wing in a magazine, but hadn't expected to catch sight of it in the UK.

"Indcar had brought a green left hand drive Wing over from Spain. It really caught my eye. It was such a really good quality vehicle and had a lot of style about it.

"Of course, there were plenty of good accessible minibuses there at the Exhibition, and I could see that they were well made. But at the end of the day, to me, they still look like vans with windows."

The Wing is a luxury minicoach, seating 22, 24 or 26. It is a common sight on the roads in Spain, but new to the British market. It has just what Fred was looking for - a combination of the luxury feel of a larger coach, with the benefits of smaller size and manoeuvrability.

FACT FILE

The Indcar Wing MXP

Chassis: Iveco 65C17

Engine: 3 litre diesel turbo charged, 166 bhp

Gearbox: Manual 6-speed

Spec: PLS Access underfloor passenger lift, Carrier Sutrak air conditioning, CD Radio/PA system, curtains on side and rear windows, convector heaters in passenger saloon with pre-heater, power operated passenger door with remote control, exterior heated windows, luggage rack, air outlets, reading lights.

Clockwise from left: Keep Mobile chair Fred Rule. The Association's Indcar Wing. A passenger lift is fitted to the rear. Happy customers on board the Wing

The Wing is bodybuilt by Indcar, of Arbucies, near Gerona, and is based on the Iveco chassis. Irisbus has opted to use Indcar, as it is a specialist in small- and medium-sized vehicles.

The ball was set rolling about the possibility of an accessible version of the Wing through a conversation between Fred and Gael Queralt, owner of Indcar, who had come over to the UK for the 2004 exhibition,

B.A.S.E were also impressed with what they saw, and shortly after the CTA exhibition approached Indcar to take on the agency in the UK for the Wing. The company took Fred Rule out to Spain to work on the specification for an accessible version of the coach.

"Fred knew what he wanted, says Mike Forshaw, director of B.A.S.E. "We agreed a specification, and Indcar did the rest."

Mike Forshaw says that the luxury minicoach is a new market they want to break in to. "The Wing is very different from what is currently available," he adds.

Keep Mobile took delivery of the UK's first accessible Wing in November 2005. "As an engineer, I can really appreciate the technology behind the Wing," says Fred. "Good design and build are most important to me. It isn't a converted van, but a coach built vehicle to a high finish. What I like about it is the space it gives us. We've got room for the wheelchairs, and room for plenty of luggage as well."

The vehicle is good to look at, its styling and finish giving it the appearance of a coach rather than minibus. Although it is fitted with a passenger lift, large folding doors enable it to retain a coach-like appearance when viewed from the rear.

The vehicle is high off the ground, and wide, at 2.4 metres. It has large tinted windows, and overhead luggage racks, as well as room for luggage underneath.

It has been fitted with Unwin tracking, and can take up to seven wheelchairs. Keep Mobile usually opts for a combination of four wheelchairs, and 12 seated passengers.

"I was adamant I wanted a vehicle with air conditioning," adds Fred. "This is a really big issue for the voluntary sector. Major funders such as the National Lottery regard air conditioning as a luxury. Our customers need it just like anyone else, so I insisted, even if it meant that our grant application was turned down."

Keep Mobile

Keep Mobile is a charity registered under the Industrial and Provident Act, and operates across two district council areas, Wokingham and Bracknell. It runs a range of community transport services including dial-a-ride, shopping bus and group hire.

It is run by a management committee made up of wheelchair users and other people involved in accessible transport. Fred Rule is the chair. Membership is open to anyone who is disabled or aged over 70.

Each vehicle does around 1,200km a week, and around 60 passengers travel on the service daily. The scheme has 19 paid part-time drivers and 8 volunteer drivers, all working under Section 19, plus an office staff of five. Drivers are trained to the Community Transport Association's MiDAS standard.

Its turnover is £400,000 a year, of which it raises nearly a third itself through hosting events, shaking tins in the street and appeals.

Fred Rule has been instrumental in developing the project, which is based in converted stable buildings. A retired engineer, he 'works' more or less full-time as a volunteer at the association.

Seven years ago, the National Lottery had agreed to part-fund an earlier vehicle, a Mercedes Vario, at a total cost of £46,000, but Fred says funders are not prepared to support what they regard as luxury vehicles.

Undeterred, and unwilling to give in on a matter of principle - that disabled people deserve the best - Keep Mobile resolved to fundraise the £80,000 needed for the accessible Wing conversion themselves. This they did through a variety of means, varying from coffee mornings and raffles, to profit made on the excursions.

Fred adds. "Someone sitting in an office somewhere might say, you can get a far cheaper 16-seater accessible vehicle. But you've got to see it to appreciate the difference. What matters to most CT operators like myself is what we can offer our users."

On Keep Mobile excursions, 80% are aged over 70, and 55% are wheelchair passengers. They might only go out once or twice a week, and it's important that they travel in comfort and have a trip they enjoy, he says.

Driver Mike Sherren enjoys driving the Wing. "Everyone comments on the ride and the good suspension. It's a joy to drive and the passengers love it," he says. It even has its own name, Victory, after a 'name the vehicle' competition.

So far, there have been no major problems with the new vehicle, although the back doors did need adjustment.

It's safe to drive, too, adds Fred. "All our drivers are fully experienced in fire and evacuation procedures. We can get four wheelchairs and everyone else out in two minutes."

Although Keep Mobile is still the only operator of an accessible Wing, the Royal Star and Garter, of the Royal British Legion, are about to take delivery of one, with two more orders in the pipeline.

Fred doesn't feel he was taking a gamble in ordering a vehicle no one else in the country was operating. "I know we can trust Iveco. I am very familiar with the chassis, and the parts are readily available and economic." He has good words, too, for B.A.S.E. "They are a family run firm, and they treat their customers well. I would recommend any CT to do what we have done.

"Driving the Wing will bring them into the 21st century. It gives equal accessibility to disabled people with mainstream coaches, and I think that is very important."

■ Keep Mobile 0845 3456696

RENAULT TRAFIC SL29 dCi 100

Stylish Trafic beater

The Renault Trafic is one of the best-looking minibuses on the market. Minibus editor Martin Cole takes a test drive in this ever popular vehicle

Renault's lightweight, factory-built minibus, the Trafic, has been around for some time but, for test purposes, so far we've only been able to get a Vauxhall Vivaro derivative from the same genus of products.

Renault shares the same vehicle platform for both the Master and Trafic with Vauxhall and Nissan and there are few differences between the competing brands - and none between the Trafic and the Primastar except the badge and price. Vauxhall, by comparison, fits its own engines.

The Trafic is still a real head-turner featuring highly distinctive styling which is emphasised by the tinted glazing contoured to the body shape. Careful selection of livery or vinyl graphics can lift the appearance further and transform Trafic into a very exciting or appealing form of transport.

Only one option, a nine-seat version is available through Renault's sales chain, but there are two options on weight. The SL27 dCi 100 has a payload of 917kg and the SL29 dCi 100 offers 1,048kg. Both vehicles feature the 1.9 litre diesel engine and are based on the short wheelbase (3,098mm), low roofed body. The difference is in the suspension rating and allows those choosing the SL29 dCi 100 a greater degree of flexibility when it comes to carrying capacity.

Right: The Renault Trafic shares its platform with Vauxhall and Nissan variants. The Renault has always been a head turner.

Equipment

The nine-seat layout, eight passengers plus driver, is set in three rows of three. There is a double seat alongside the driver and two treble seats in the rear saloon. Some luggage space is available between the rear seats and the tailgate and a removable rear shelf (baggage cover) is installed - similar to those in hatchback or estate cars. The rear tailgate incorporates a heated screen and it hinges upwards providing some shelter from the elements when loading or unloading.

Further flexibility on loading arrangements comes from a versatile rear seat where, if the travelling party is no more than five passengers, the back of the rear seat can be folded down, the whole seat can be folded away - or it can be removed completely in order to accommodate a lot more luggage. Alternatively, the Trafic can be fitted with a towbar and pull a luggage trailer with loads of up to two tonnes.

Access to the saloon is via sliding centre doors, one on either side and facilitated by a cutaway step to make boarding easier. The one failing of note with the Trafic quickly becomes evident when trying to access the rear row of seats through the offside sliding door. There is very little space between the door pillar and the seat backs of the centre row - making it a tight squeeze and not something that would be enjoyed by large or elderly passengers. Fortunately, the nearside offers ›

Bottom row, from far left: Offside sliding door offers limited access to rear seats – nearside is better. Rear hatch door opens upwards; optional rear shelf is pictured. Stylish Trafic is fairly low-roofed.

RENAULT TRAFIC **SL29 dCi 100**

Clockwise from above: Virtually effortless joystick-style gearshift. Centre seat folds on nearside help access. Test vehicle included optional satnav system. Recessed grab handles aid entry

improved access as the outer seat back in the centre row can be tilted forwards - making it much easier to climb in.

Once seated, there is plenty of legroom for back-seat passengers and the seat itself is quite comfortable. Like the other seats, there are three-point lap and diagonal seatbelts for every position and the rear seatbelts also have load limiters and pre-tensioners.

Although there isn't a great deal of headroom in the low-roofed Trafic, once passengers are seated they are quite comfortable and the light interior trim helps to make it feel spacious. Conversions done on Trafic panel vans would allow the selection of an optional high roof to increase the internal space and headroom in the saloon, but the extra roof height is not particularly attractive and tends to spoil the Trafic's stylish appearance.

In the cab area, the light trim, ABS-moulded dash, fascia and ergonomic styling are claimed to create a stress-reducing environment. It's difficult the say whether this is true, or not, but it is an attractive design and everything falls easily to hand.

Plenty of stowage space for drinks and personal effects is built into the cab with deep door pockets, glove compartment and useful recesses all combining to make the cab user-friendly. Carpeting on the cab floor also makes it feel more luxurious.

Driver comfort is aided by a multi-adjustable seat and an adjustable steering column allowing the steering wheel to be raised, lowered or tilted to suit individual preferences.

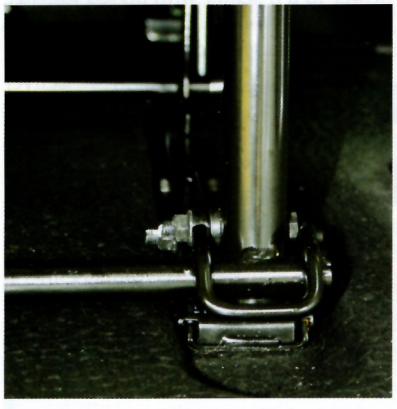
Optional extras fitted to the demonstration vehicle included electric windows and electrically adjustable mirrors, satellite navigation with a display screen built into the dash, attractive wheel trims emulating alloy wheels, baggage cover and front foglamps. Renault does not advocate fitting alloy wheels to passenger carrying vehicles as they have been known to shatter if they hit something hard at high speed, such as a pot hole or kerb. Although a steel wheel would probably deform under the same circumstances it would be more likely to remain on the vehicle and assist in maintaining control.

On the road

The 1.9 litre engine starts easily and runs very quietly. Combined with the six-speed manual gearbox it allows fairly brisk acceleration and always has a gear for every driving situation. Driven unladen, the Trafic's sixth gear is quite practical and not merely an overdrive ratio, but with a full load aboard it really becomes a fuel saving device once cruising speed has been reached.

The short joystick-style gearchange lever offers light,

Opposite page from far right: Test vehicle fitted with 'alloy wheel-style' wheel trims; Renault don't offer alloy option. Frugal 1.9-litre engine can muster 37mpg combined. Rear seats can be totally removed to aid load carrying.



positive control and is virtually effortless in operation. Clutch action is light and pedal travel quite short - making it quite fun to drive in urban environments where its nimble handling and spritely agility mean it is very easy to keep up with traffic flows or make lane changes confidently.

Handling at high or low speed is both sound and secure and backed by highly effective braking from discs all-round. Very little pressure is required to bring the vehicle to a rapid halt and there is plenty of feel on the pedal. Steering is positive, precise and nicely weighted and the suspension soft enough to give a smooth ride without compromising the handling. Front suspension is fully independent based on McPherson struts and the whole strut and wishbone assembly is mounted on a separate cradle which is double-insulated to cut out noise and vibration.

The only concerns over stability arose while driving on exposed roads with the March winds throwing everything they could muster at the Trafic - it certainly felt the effects but was able to withstand the onslaught without too much deviation. Fitted with a high roof it may not have coped so well and would probably require considerably more speed reduction in order to stay safely on course.

The braking system includes ABS antilock, EBD brake force distribution, ESP stability programme and ASR traction control for additional safety. This adds up to a comfortable and secure environment from which small-party travel can be accomplished with ease.

Running costs are reduced by extended service intervals of 18,000 miles or two years and official figures show fuel consumption to be around 30 mpg for urban driving, 42 mpg for extra-urban and a combined average of 37 mpg. Renault offers a three-year warranty on the paintwork and a massive 12 years anti-perforation warranty - providing the owner maintains scheduled service procedures with officially sanctioned agents.

Summary

Trafic is an appealing little vehicle that is a pleasure to drive and a comfortable ride for passengers. Lean operating costs make it an ideal vehicle for providing link services or contracts where larger minibuses would struggle to operate viably. Despite their size, these small buses can be made wheelchair accessible although conventional seating virtually disappears as a result, but it demonstrates their flexibility. Some years ago most people would only consider them as useful for driver shuttles and airport runs - but those who do keep one or more in their fleets seem to find increasing uses for them.

FACT FILE

Specification SL27 dCi 100
Engine: 1.9 dCi 100 – four cylinder, Euro III, 100hp (74kW)
Torque: 240 Nm at 2,000 rpm
Wheelbase: 3,098mm
Gearbox: six-speed manual
Brakes: servo-assisted dual-circuit hydraulic discs F&R
Steering: power-assisted rack and pinion
Turning circle: 11.84m – kerb to kerb
Fuel capacity: 90 litres
Unladen weight: 1,845 kg
Gross weight: 2,760 kg
Payload: 915 kg
Length: 4,782mm
Height: 1,904mm
Width: 1,904mm
Base price: £15,963.40 + VAT (£2,793.60) = £18,757
Mfrs OTR price: £19,465

SL29 dCi 100 - as above with the following exceptions:
Unladen weight: 1,852 kg
Gross weight: 2,900 kg
Payload: 1,048 kg
Base price: £16,440 + VAT (£2,877) = £19,317
Mfrs OTR price: £20,025

WE LIKED

- Attractive looks
- Comfortable seats
- Good performer around town
- Lean operating costs

WE DISLIKED

- Limited access to rear seats

Vauxhall minibuses

The highly successful range of Vauxhall minibuses has grown significantly.

Lining up alongside the 9-seat Vivaro Combi is the 12-seat long wheelbase model, while Movano now tops the range with a seriously big 17-seater. And Vauxhall aren't finished yet; even more flexible versions of the Vivaro and Movano minibuses are on their way in the near future.

Movano

When you need a big minibus, the new Movano 17-seater fits the bill perfectly. High roofed and long wheelbased, it's ideally equipped for clubs and societies, schools, colleges, businesses and other applications. With 15-seat, 16-seat and wheelchair-accessible variants also in the Movano range, whether you're ferrying the school rugby team or the over 60s ladies' bowling team, Vauxhall have your needs covered.

A choice of two frugal but powerful 2.5 CDTi common-rail diesel engines (100 and 115 PS), matched to either a five- or six-speed manual gearbox or, in the 15 and 16-seaters, optional Tecshift semi-automatic transmission, allows the operator to match performance to function. Anti-lock braking comes as standard. And a 24,000 mile service interval and three year/100,000 mile base vehicle warranty make sure the cost efficiencies continue to add up.

A Movano minibus provides a comfortable travelling environment. The rear cabin features attractive seat trim, comfortable seats, wipe-clean inner window panels and lower side panels and an easy-clean floor. Optional, height adjustable pneumatic suspension can provide an even greater ride comfort for all passengers. Passenger access is swift and straightforward, through Movano's wide-opening rear doors and via a sliding side-access door with retractable low level step, where a light and "step-out" warning buzzer signpost the level of care taken to ensure passenger safety.

Passenger safety is key, and amongst the standard features built into the specification are integral inertia-reel lap and diagonal rear seatbelts, with M1 tested seats, seatbelts and anchorages throughout, height adjustable 'A' frame rear head restraints, a non-slip floor covering, first aid kit and two fire extinguishers.

Vivaro

The same high standards for safety, performance and economy are equally visible in the Vivaro minibus - combined with a luxurious interior specification that makes Vivaro the perfect choice for upmarket courtesy and business transport.

Vivaro's elegant good looks speak for themselves, and with tinted windows in the distinctive rear doors, a top quality cloth seat trim, full height side-mouldings, saloon lighting and full-length panelled soft-trimmed headlining, interior comfort is assured.

Practicality is second to none. The nearside sliding side-access door gives easy access to the individual rear seats, and if extra luggage capacity is required. The Vivaro Combi can easily and quickly be transformed from a 9-seater to a 6-seater with added luggage space.

Both the 1.9CDTi 82 and 100 PS common-rail diesel engines deliver extraordinary fuel economy together with a more than satisfying performance. Power-assisted steering, ABS, an engine deadlock immobiliser and CD player are all standard features and adaptive suspension ensures a comfortable ride no matter how many passengers are on board.

Running a Vauxhall minibus

Not only do Vauxhall have a minibus to match your needs; they can also offer a range of acquisition methods to suit your purchasing and procurement needs. And to point you on the correct route through the maze of law and regulations governing the safe running of minibuses, Vauxhall have produced an invaluable "Guide to Minibuses". Covering everything from choice of vehicle and method of funding through to best practice and driver legislation it's full of helpful information. For your free copy, and to locate your nearest Vauxhall Commercial Vehicle Retailer, contact Vauxhall on 0845 600 1500. Alternatively, if you'd like to discuss your fleet requirements and the ways in which Vauxhall may be able to assist, contact our professional Fleet Helpline on 0870 010 0651.

VAUXHALL
Commercial Vehicles

Have you taken delivery of a new minibus and want to tell the world about it? Email all the details and pictures to *martin.cole@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to the address on page 3

RS LAWMAN

Kettering-based RS Lawman (Coaches) recently 'nabbed' this Sitcar Beluga from Moseley PCV.

Based on a Mercedes-Benz O815 DT the 33-seater comes with a high specification including a fully adjustable driver's seat with headrest and armrests, tinted double glazing, driver's door with electrically operated and heated window, electro-pneumatic plug-type entrance door, Audio/CD/PA system, carpeted gangway and entrance area, moquette trim to engine cover and decorative curtains.

The O815 DT is powered by a 152bhp engine and drives through a ZF 5S-42 gearbox. A 100 Amp alternator is fitted to ensure sufficient power for on-board applications and the braking system is supported by a Telma CC80 electromagnetic retarder.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Mercedes-Benz O815 DT
Engine 152 bhp
Transmission Manual 5-speed
Seats 33
Spec Air con, double glazing, CD/PA
Supplied by Moseley PCV 01977 609000

Passenger comfort and ride quality is enhanced by rear air suspension and the touring capability benefits from a 125 litre fuel tank.

The company's Julian Lawman said: "This is the second Beluga we've bought in the last 12 months. We were very pleased with the first one and the new addition is exactly the same with the exception of the minor improvements - such as switches, new-style mirrors and slightly altered windows.

"We run it on general private hires and its performance is adequate for the type of work we apply it to. We're also very happy it enjoys the support and back-up of Moseley PCV. Our fleet is now virtually all Moseley-supplied. They look after us very well."

B.A.S.E. Ltd ... the operator's dealer

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Indcar Wing

Luxury Mini Coach Standard Specification

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Luxury Seats

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OFFERS

RENAULT CUT-PRICE OFFER UNTIL JULY

Celebrating the anniversary of its launch onto the UK market, Renault's Quickshift6 robotised gearbox is being offered at half the normal cost for a limited period. The automated manual transmission offers the ease and simplicity of automatic operation combined with the option of clutchless manual up or down sequential changing.

Customers contemplating the purchase of Trafic dCi 140 or Master dCi 100 and 120 models can take advantage of the £400 saving by ordering their vehicles by June 30 and registering them before September 30, 2006.

The offers don't stop there. Renault has put together a varied package allowing customers to choose specification upgrades and save money in other areas. For Trafic and Master there is a combined package of satellite navigation with colour screen and mapping, air conditioning, electric windows and electrically adjustable and heated mirrors, which can be acquired for an additional £1,250 + VAT – a saving of £500 on list price.

Master customers can also obtain a satellite navigation system, and electric window/mirror system for £1,000 + VAT – also saving £500.

Air conditioning upgrade only packs are also available at £500 + VAT – again saving 50% off normal cost.

■ Further information on the options available can be obtained from Renault dealerships. Alternatively, visit the company's website at www.renault.co.uk

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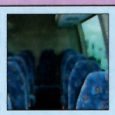
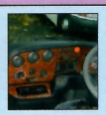
IVECO





BRAND NEW IVECO TOP OF THE RANGE LUXURY MINI COACH WITH POWER DOOR

Surround sound, LWB, twin wheel, high roof, large boot, front entry, wood dash, individual blown air with reading lights, 17 luxury soft trim seats, huge tinted panoramic windows, large quad vent, luggage racks, full C.O.I.F. + P.S.V.

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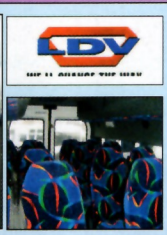

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03 PLATE LDV CONVOY

(TURBO DIESEL)

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by Ken Robins

I'm siding with Sutton (not)

Ken Robins, managing director of Excelsior Coaches in Bournemouth, has his tongue-in-cheek say on the Isle of Wight coach dispute, which started with parking charges and has now reached the attention of the national press.

The increased coaching charges and comments by Isle of Wight Conservative council leader Andy Sutton are right on the nail.

The IoW business plan for tourism cannot, as he says, succeed if coaches continue to come to the island and it is time that operators, such as myself, and the rest of the industry accept that he is right and we are wrong.

Most coach operators and their clients don't live by the sea, and definitely don't live on an island in the sea. They have no idea of the damage 'clean' air can do to the lungs. By banning coaches carrying, on average say, 40 passengers each, and replacing them by, say 20 cars, the increase in the level of exhaust pollution goes some way to offset the damage caused by the ocean breezes that IoW residents have to put up with. And that calculation doesn't even take into account the extra exhaust pollution from the traffic jams that replacing coaches with cars will create.

I doubt that these complaining coach operators have any idea of the economics of 'roadside' sales to the IoW economy. With the elimination of coaches and the wall-to-wall traffic jams of retired couples in cars, the IoW economy can rely on these traffic jams to create a 'captive' audience for the new roadside outlets that the council plan to build. You will be able to buy flowers, fruits, garden manure, etc. every 50 yards alongside virtually every road in the IoW when Councillor Andy Sutton's objectives are achieved.

And don't for a minute think that he isn't planning ahead with even more exotic sales outlets. Year Two of the business plan sees the influx of hundreds of roadside windscreen cleaners. Now, the original plan was to erect traffic lights every 100 yards to give them a captive, static market but by changing from coach travel to total reliance on car travel, the cost of all those traffic lights is eliminated – the resultant traffic jams will, in themselves, suffice to ensure that every car visiting the IoW will have the opportunity of having its windscreen cleaned every 100 yards or so.

But the icing on the cake for the Andy Sutton business plan is for hoteliers, who will be able to ensure that their guests have possibly the best service they have ever experienced... I saw this in operation many, many years ago when I worked in the Middle East and stopped off in Cyprus for a break on my way back to the UK.

The Greek-Turkish armies' invasion and partition of the Island occurred the day before I arrived, and those 'in the know' were expecting one hell of a fight as the two rival armies clashed. All flights from Europe were thus cancelled, but not the flight I was on, since it came form the Middle East. CNN hadn't started up then, so nobody knew or cared about the two rival armies' stand-off.

Ken Robins, the managing director of Excelsior Coaches in Bournemouth. Below: the magazine that started the row

So my friend and I arrived to a very quiet Cyprus and were the sole guests in what I guess was a 300-plus bedroom hotel. The experience of dining alone in a restaurant with a six-piece orchestra, 20 or so waiters, etc. was quite something. Clearly Andy is determined that each and every visitor to the Island will be able to experience something very similar, especially between March and July, and again after September. And he hasn't even had to arrange for an invasion to pull this off.

My hat's off to Andy – a man whose views are the equivalent of all that garden manure that they plan to sell in the new roadside sales outlets...

If you want to let off some steam, just tap away at the keyboard and send your rant (or carefully-reasoned views) to cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk, or fax 0845 280 2927. Make 'Open Platform' the subject line. Alternatively, send your missive to Coach and Bus Week, Unit 3, The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Peterborough PE7 8FD

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE...

Liberal Democrat interview

What can shadow transport minister Alistair Carmichael add to the transport debate?

PLUS Profile: Golden Boy coaches

PLUS The CPT's Scottish conference

Send your letters to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk*, fax 0845 2802927 or write to: Inbox, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

LETTER OF THE WEEK

I am writing in response to Kevin Radley's Letter of the Week (April 12 issue) concerning increases in the Isle of Wight coach parking charges.

I would like to add fuel to the fire by bringing to the attention of *CBW* readers the unbelievable attitude and arrogance of an Isle of Wight Council leader, Andy Sutton. In particular, an article published in the *Daily Telegraph* on Monday, April 17.

The article draws attention to a comment made by Mr Sutton, the Conservative leader, who is reported as saying coaches bringing holidaymakers contributed nothing but damage to IoW roads, and passengers did not spend enough money to make their visits worthwhile. Mr Sutton went on to say he wanted to encourage higher value tourism – whatever that is supposed to mean.

Tourism chiefs on the island are outraged at Mr Sutton's comments, that were directed at the 'bucket and spade brigade.' They said his comments could cost the island £50 million in lost tourism revenue. The article went on to mention that the Coach Tourism Council, already concerned at the 100% increase in coach parking charges, cancelled a fact-finding visit, saying their 400 members might withdraw the island from tour and holiday programmes in 2007.

I have nothing but admiration for Kevin Radley for his stand in withdrawing visits to the island. Perhaps all coach operators should follow his example and boycott the IoW until the council comes to its senses?

Brian Newton, director, Newtons of Guildford

***CBW* says: We might mention with some pride that the story of the doubling of coach parking charges was, of course, broken exclusively by *CBW* on April 5. Two weeks ago we detailed Mr Sutton's comments, and last week's issue (which crossed in the post with your letter) dealt with the subsequent stink caused by those remarks, in the local island magazine.**

We are still keen to hear from operators who have decided to follow Mr Radley's example and delete 2007 tours from their programmes, or have a better idea of how the industry can protest this issue – or any other problem like it, since the Isle of Wight is hardly unique in rarely sparing a thought for coach tourism.

Write to cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk or fax 0845 280 2927. Or call on 01733 293240 and ask for the newsdesk.

WIN A BUS! Sort of... Drop us a line and if your letter is chosen as our Letter of the Week, you'll receive a top-notch coach or bus model courtesy of our friends at Corgi. Please try to keep your letters under 200 words. The editor's decision is final.

Sanctions that don't bite

Am I the only one to notice the penalties applied to First Group, (*CBW* News, April 5)?

My companies have never received a suspension notice for any vehicle. One of our Operator Licences was revoked for running too many vehicles on a scheduled service. This revocation was reversed by the Transport Tribunal.

To a small operator, it is a considerable penalty to be called to a PI and an even higher one to have to go to the Transport Tribunal. Traffic Commissioners are unaccountable in that costs are not recoverable, even when they make cock-ups.

What kind of penalty is First Group's supposed to be and what message does it send to operators and the public? It suggests to me that:-

- Operators should apply for far more discs than they actually need.
- If they are ever brought to book on maintenance, operators simply lose a few unused discs with no effect to their operating capacity.
- The travelling public should not assume that the vehicle fleets of large operators are well maintained.
- There is one rule for big operators and one for small operators.

This report confirms what everybody always knew. Commissioners' powers in respect of large operators of Public Service Routes do not really exist. The licence of a large operator cannot be revoked as such action could leave entire towns or cities with no bus service. Clearly, not a real option.

Name and address supplied

April 26 in history:

1937 The Nazis test the *Luftwaffe* out, at General Franco's request, on the Spanish village of Guernica

1986 The world's worst nuclear power plant accident occurs at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in the Soviet Union.

1989 Comedian Lucille Ball dies at age 78.

1994 South Africa holds first multiracial elections

5 YEARS AGO Brian Nimick becomes the new director general of the CPT. Flights' Starliner wins three trophies at Brighton

10 YEARS AGO Boons' Setra wins top coach and Dudley Haynes is Driver of the Year at Brighton

20 YEARS AGO Coachmart editor Houston Ramm leaves for Carlton PSV. Flights' Setra S228 Imperial wins Coach of the Year at Brighton

Spreading it around

When it comes to risk, Galloway's policy of diversification seems to be working its magic. Editor Mark Williams talks to Bernie Miles to find out how it evolved from a London school tour operator...

The million-pound investment by Galloway European Coachlines in four bespoke Van Hools is among many strings the Suffolk company had added to its bow over four decades.

The upmarket Sapphire Star branding (*CBW*, April 19) launched this month takes it place at the glitzy end of Galloway's remarkable spread of business, but a stroll around the yard at Mendlesham shows that it hasn't lost touch with the bread-and-butter work.

An old but smart Olympian awaits the afternoon school run; two plain but workmanlike Plaxton Beavers are out soon on similar duties; a DAF Ikarus bought from defunct London Coaches is cleaned ready for private hire; and one of its beloved DAF Van Hools in National Express livery is getting a full service.

'Bernie' Miles is as proud of the rest of the fleet as he is of the star-spangled T9s. This becomes apparent gradually as we talk about the evolution of the business, from beginnings in central London through a reincarnation in dual ownership, its management buyout, to the present day.

Set up to pioneer school tours by coach in 1964, Galloway still provides £1.7 million-worth of student travel in addition to its home-to-school services.

"In the 1960s, Galloway was doing ski work," said Bernie. "I think the Galloway name was one of the director's wife's maiden names - it was just a name," he says, and coming from a man originally christened John, I defer to his understanding of this subject.

At the time, Galloway was hiring in its vehicles, as do most of the school trip specialists who have leapt on the bandwagon since. It moved out of London to Colchester, and then to Sudbury, but by the 1970s, it became obvious that there was much to be gained by running its own vehicles.

Around that time, it joined financial forces with Paul Cresswell's County Travel and bought the established Mendlesham operator Braybrooke & Son, taking over its village-centre depot and losing the Braybrooke name to become Galloway European Coachlines.

In the mid-1980s, Bernie Miles joined the company, bringing with him a small tour programme. County Travel withdrew from the business alliance, and shortly afterwards the chance to buy a service station just outside of the village meant the old Braybrookes site could be sold for development. By 1997, David Cattermole, Roger Stedman and Bernie Miles had hatched a plan for a management buyout. The team is still

in place today.

Progressively they have developed the site, buying an adjacent haulage yard to extend, and adding new workshops, a troublesome coach wash (now working properly) and adding to the stock of ready-built office units only last year.

Tour operations

The bedrock on which Galloway's name was built, school tours still form a significant part of the Galloway business.

Originally focused on ski tours, the brochure grew and changed. These days, it majors on WWI battlefield tours, but with a variety of other departures, sold up and down the country: "We have developed relationships with other operators such as Bibbys and Titteringtons, and latterly Johnsons, who take schools too far for us to cover," said Miles.

The depth of experience at Galloway ensures the operation turns over the best part of £2 million a year - the kind of turnover other tour operators have envied, and imitated. An understanding of the National Curriculum and the way teachers like to book has ensured that the programme has held its own.

When Miles arrived in 1984, he brought with him a small coach tour programme for the general market, which added to a pilot Galloway had just started: "They'd taken that direction because of the highly seasonal nature of schools tours. We had the vehicles, so we consciously developed the adult programme," he said.

"The adult tour programme overtook schools three years ago, and last year produced £2.2 million turnover, versus the £1.7 million we get from school tours."

The tour operation is partly organised from Galloway's Ipswich travel shop. It has two travel shops, the other in Sudbury, and is looking at a third, but it's at Ipswich that much of the planning is done.

The shops sell air tours, too, under the ATOL held by the Consortium of

WHO'S WHO

David Cattermole
Managing director

Bernie Miles
Commercial director

Roger Stedman
Finance director

Jeff Stocker
Engineering manager

Ian Stocker
Acting engineering manager

Andy Kemp
Senior traffic manager

Left: Ready-built offices house the company. Below: The company has two NatEx routes. Right: The Sapphire Star concept is new territory for Galloways.

COMPANY HISTORY

1964 Galloway founded in London
1966 Galloway moves to Colchester
1974 Galloway moves to Sudbury
1978 County Travel takes a stake and Galloway buys Braybrooke, moving to Mendlesham
1989 County Travel sells its share to John Stedman
1990 Galloway moves to Denters Hill site, a former service station
1995 Galloway builds new workshop
1997 MBO takes over as John Stedman retires
2004 Galloway buys adjacent haulage yard to increase space
2005 Coach wash installed

The site has been gradually developed over recent years

Independent Tour Agents, and has latterly been selling Fred Olsen cruises with great success.

National Express

Galloway's association with National Express began in 1989 with the Stowmarket-Sudbury-Victoria service.

It now employs three vehicles, mostly based at an outstation in Clacton. Services now run are Felixstowe-Ipswich-London and Clacton-London. Every third night, one of the three vehicles is back at Mendlesham getting the once-over.

The high-mileage services employ second-life Van Hools, which are returned to Galloway's local hire fleet for a couple of years before being sold on.

Bus services

Braybrookes was the starting point for the interesting blend of stage carriage work now being run by Galloway.

It was a traditional rural operator, running a number of market day services: "For a while, we carried them on at a loss but when councils starting tendering for supported services, we saw an opportunity," said Miles. "In 1999 we won several routes and integrated the services with the market-day runs using Plaxton Beavers."

> "the National Express drivers are a breed apart, and other drivers make the most of the tour work"

Galloway now runs the supported 384 Stowmarket to Bury, the 456 and 457 Stowmarket-Diss services - the original 'rail replacement' when Dr Beeching closed regional stations - and the 110 Claydon-Ipswich.

The bus fleet now includes two 38-seat Wrights Cadets, a 72-seat Optare Spectra decker, 51-seat Ikarus, 43-seat UVG Urbanstar, four 31-seat Beavers and a 44-seat Wrights Scania. The latter vehicle serves the Ipswich route, the 110, replacing a Dart which though ›

reliable, struggled with the hills and the intensity of the service, says Miles.

The 110 has been taken on commercially, thanks to the "redistribution" of subsidy caused by the national free fare scheme, and is performing well. But Miles says question marks still remain over how the council's reimbursement scheme will work.

Driver driven

Miles is candid about the many reasons Galloway spreads its work across a variety of areas.

Partly it's the business equivalent of hedging bets; if one operation has a tough year, the likelihood is there's a balance from one which is performing well: "But we also need this variety because we have a mix of drivers. We have coach drivers who don't want to do anything else. Some drivers only do bus work, the National Express drivers are a breed apart, and other drivers make the most of the tour work.

"Our drivers come from all kinds of backgrounds - most have been something else earlier in their working lives. One was an HGV driver, another a bank clerk," says Miles. "We like to gradually work them into the company and bring them on.

> We usually put down big deposits... but we don't want all our cash tied up in metalwork

"Having this spread of work has stood us in good stead."

Fleet utilisation

There's no set pattern for the replacement cycle in the Galloway fleet, though on the tour side, the policy of the last 10 years has been to buy new and cascade down to the schools work.

"Our vehicle requirements are entirely customer and business driven," said Miles. "The top end of the touring fleet for the last 10 years has been bought new, then downgraded and replaced.

"The school tour fleet isn't entirely separate - there is overlap when we use the best vehicles. But the school tours give them heavy use, and they must be heavy-duty touring coaches as they are often working back-to-back."

Above: Galloways was set up to pioneer school tours , the company still provides student travel, now using its own vehicles. Below: maintenance is in-house

On the day excursion programme Galloway uses the best of the fleet that's available. The lower end of the fleet is 10- to 12-years-old coaches, but all are immaculate.

Galloway chooses from a variety of finance deals to purchase vehicles: "We usually put down big deposits because we want to own them eventually, but we don't want all our cash tied up in metalwork," said Miles.

Digital tachograph

Galloway is among the first coach operators to have digital tachograph in daily use, and says the rest have some hurdles to jump.

The move wasn't forced on to Galloway - in fact, the Beulas Cygnus

FLEET LIST

Body Type	Chassis Type	Seats
Alexander	Leyland	49
4 Van Hool Alizee T8	DAF/VDL	49
Van Hool Alizee T8	DAF/VDL	51
Van Hool Alizee T8	DAF/VDL	53
10 Van Hool Alizee T9	DAF/VDL	49
2 Van Hool Alizee T9	DAF/VDL	53
4 Van Hool Astron T916S	DAF/VDL	49
M-B Vito 110cdi Traveliner	Mercedes	8
Temsa Safari Hd	DAF/VDL PE2286	53
3 Plaxton Beaver 2	Mercedes	31
2 Plaxton Beaver 2	Mercedes	33
Plaxton Paramount 3200	DAF/VDL	57
2 Plaxton Paramount 3500	DAF/VDL	53
Plaxton Cheetah	Mercedes	33
Plaxton Prima	DAF/VDL	53
Optare Spectra	DAF/VDL Db 250	72
2 Ikarus	DAF/VDL	53
Ikarus Citybus	DAF/VDL	51
Eastern Coachworks	Leyland	77
2 Wright	VDL SB 120	38
Wright	Scania	44
Beulas Stergo 'E'	Iveco	49
2 Nouvelle 2	Mercedes	29
UVG Urbanstar	Cummins	43
Autobus	Mercedes	24
2 Mercedes Vito 111	Mercedes	8

Above: the coach wash bay is a recent addition to the yard. Right: Galloways was an early adopter of the digital age, but warns other operators to expect hurdles

that is about to go into service almost had an analogue tachograph before Galloway insisted it was digital. The four Van Hool Astrons on Sapphire Star service were the first to arrive ready for the digital age, and precipitated a big drive to train staff.

"We took the view that this was the future and that it was inevitable," said Miles. "We decided to get on top of it straight away. We started to make preparations in December."

The first training session - held by long-time supplier The Watson Consultancy (TWC) at Long Stratton - saw eight drivers at the one-day course, and in a few weeks, 15 will be trained. Though it helps that Galloway aims to have a one-driver, one-vehicle policy, Miles warns that there's a danger that the training will be forgotten by the time some drivers use their driver card the first time.

"I'm a good example. I got through the course, but actually getting on to a vehicle and inputting all the data a month later was a challenge. I'm just as concerned that the enforcement agencies know what they are looking at when the time comes."

> **"I'm just as concerned that the enforcement agencies know what they are looking at"**

Miles says the driver changeovers have been taking at least 10 minutes, and operators considering digital tachograph should avoid makeshift changeover stops on the side of the road.

Analysis of tachograph discs has always been farmed out to TWC, which Miles says ensures the independence that traffic commissioners like to see. TWC is also analysing digital records, and continues to be Galloway's main source of training.

Clockwise from above: The four new Van Hool Astrons look stunning in their Sapphire Star livery. Each coach is named after a constellation. Interier trim features 49 part-leather seats. Fully-equipped driver's area

Van Hool Astrons are a star turn

Galloway now has four unique Van Hools working to improve tour margins.

The idea for the four, 13-metre Astrons and the brand came at last year's UK Coach Rally in Brighton, and involved fellow VDL/DAF aficionado Mike Eaves of Eavesway, who brought one of his 13.8-metre tri-axle Van Hools to show what can be done.

"At almost 14 metres we did think they were over-long for us, but they set us thinking," said Bernie Miles.

At 49 seats on three axles, the new Van Hools offer a very high level of comfort while low seating capacity enables us to conform with the maximum gross weight when we have a full vehicle."

The vehicles – each differently coloured, and each with the name of a star constellation – have begun their life at Galloway on private hire and corporate duties this year, but the Sapphire Star branding is already affixed to some tours and will then be interworked fully with Galloway's tour programme as a premium product. We couldn't put the extra investment into the vehicles without charging it to the consumer. We are now quietly confident that the rates we get will justify the decision to go for such a high specification," MD David Cattermole told *CBW*.

PART ONE

Anatomy of a Public Inquiry

Based on a real-life case in which only the names have been changed, Miles Dorrington looks at how maintenance went horribly wrong and led to a meeting with the traffic commissioner

Miles Dorrington is an Associate and dual-qualified barrister in the Transport Team at Bond Pearce Solicitors specialising in all aspects of passenger transport work. He regularly appears at Public Inquiries and before the Courts for operators and drivers and can be contacted on 0870 120 0000 or by email at *miles.dorrington@bondpearce.com*

Low on the list of people operators would like to meet must be Phillip Brown, the senior traffic commissioner.

Mr Brown is, of course, a perfectly decent chap, but his name and that of any of his cohort of traffic commissioners are indelibly linked with the dreaded words 'Public Inquiry'. Avoiding an encounter with the traffic commissioner is something to which operators should be religiously devoted.

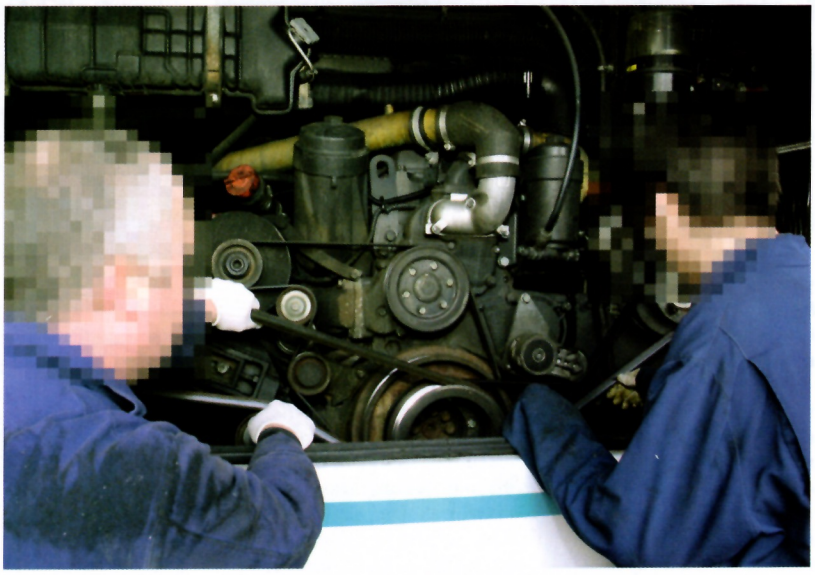
But what are the risks - how can you slip up - and if you do, what will the traffic commissioner do to you?

The operator - we'll call the company BadWay Transport - had 11 vehicles authorised on its Operating Licence and used that full authorisation. The company chose to outsource their maintenance to Crook and Spanner garage and left it entirely to their transport manager, the only CPC holder, to arrange when vehicles were to be presented for periodic maintenance inspections. Over the years BadWay Transport had a few announced visits from VOSA and had a number of prohibitions against the it from roadside checks.

Last month VOSA had called unannounced when the transport manager was in the middle of a three-week holiday and the directors could not find many of the maintenance records. From those that could be found they showed the vehicles had been presented late. Several prohibitions were imposed, including one that was 'S' marked.

An adverse maintenance report was sent to the commissioner and a PI was called for BadWay Transport to show cause why no action should be taken against their Operator's Licence as a result of the poor maintenance of their fleet. The transport manager was called in as well.

At the Public Inquiry the directors blamed the transport manager and he blamed the garage for the poor maintenance. The traffic commissioner found the operator in breach of the maintenance undertakings on the Operator's Licence, curtailed the authorisation on the Operating Licence from 11 vehicles to eight vehicles and determined that the transport manager was no longer professionally competent, but gave the company time to replace him. As a result, drivers had to be made redundant and some contracts could not be honoured as a result of the reduced fleet size.



Don't trust your transport manager to check contractors are maintaining the vehicles

Phillip Brown: not someone you'd like to meet in a professional capacity...

What went so wrong? What mistakes could have been avoided?

Clear line of management from the top to the bottom

First, there has to be a clear line of management from the directors down to the providers of the maintenance.

The duty to ensure that vehicles are roadworthy can not be passed from the Operator Licence holder to someone else outside of the company, even if they are asked to undertake the maintenance of the vehicles. Therefore the directors need to know what the transport manager and any of their support staff are doing to ensure roadworthiness and what those responsible for carrying out the maintenance of the fleet are actually doing to ensure it is being done properly to ensure compliance.

This line of communication needs to work both ways and it should be clear from the minutes of board meetings that it is being addressed. To ensure it is, directors should make their own checks on the traffic operation, in particular the transport manager.

Duties of a transport manager

Second, the transport manager has a statutory duty to ensure "continuous and effective" management of the transport operation.

That is a very onerous role, especially if they are the only CPC holder. It requires more than passive

management so that they thoroughly investigate and check all aspects of the maintenance process on a regular basis. In particular they should check that the periodic maintenance inspection sheets are properly filled in and certified before the vehicle leaves any external maintenance provider.

Random checks on vehicles should be undertaken immediately after a preventative maintenance inspection has been completed to ensure it has been done properly, even if the form says it has. Transport managers should also undertake random checks on vehicles before they are used in the morning to ensure that drivers have completed a proper first use inspection. It is not enough for them to accept completed preventative maintenance sheets or defect reporting sheets at face value.

Since the transport manager is generally responsible for all forward planning of maintenance, directors need to make sure this is being properly forward planned so that vehicles are being presented on time. This should not be left to an external provider to organise.

A rolling 12-month calendar is best with all MOT and maintenance dates shown on it for the following year. This will avoid vehicles being booked out on business when they are in fact due for a maintenance inspection and all maintenance records should be filed for each vehicle in a clear and accessible filing system that is kept for at least 15 months.

Traffic commissioners often have to consider whether a transport manager has shown "continuous" management. It is advisable for a business to have at least two CPC holders and for neither to be allowed to have holiday at the same time as the other. This allows the other CPC holder to fulfil the transport manager's role on a temporary basis when they are not there.

In the case of BadWay Transport this didn't happen, since being absent from the business for three weeks could not be said to be showing "continuous or effective" management of the transport side of the business.

Choosing a suitable maintenance provider

The choice of external maintenance provider, if they are used, is critical. When looking for a suitable provider make sure that they have adequate maintenance facilities, particularly access to a rolling road, and always ask other operators what experience they have had with them.

In your own enquiries it is a good idea to ask them what their first-time pass rate at MOT is for vehicles that they present. Once one that appears suitable has been found you will need to enter in to a clear written contractual agreement with them (a letter of intent) that not only specifies what they will do and how often but also the registration number of the vehicles that are to be maintained.

Once the maintenance provider is being used, the transport manager, by regularly checking the condition of the maintained vehicles, should communicate on a regular basis to the directors so that if any problem does develop it can be dealt with swiftly, if necessary by changing to a new provider.

You can not expect any sympathy from the traffic commissioner if you allow a maintenance problem to carry on when you could, and should, have dealt with it when it first developed.

Do you need a margin on your Operator's Licence?

Finally always consider the margin you have on your Operator's Licence. Public Inquiries work on the basis of a progressive sanction scale with a formal warning at the bottom and revocation at the top.

It is normal for an operator to have their operating authorisation curtailed at their first Public Inquiry, although this can be for a limited length of time, when breaches of undertakings that do not show a critical risk to road safety are found to have occurred. If you have no margin on your Operating Licence, if the traffic commissioner considers the proportionate sanction to be one of curtailment then the chances are that this will cause operational difficulties that will interfere with the day to day running of the business.

In the case of BadWay Transport there was no margin available so the curtailment caused considerable difficulties. Had the company had a sufficient margin on the Operating Licence then it is likely that while the Operating Licence was to be curtailed (because curtailment was the appropriate sanction) it would not have been for an amount that either went beyond the margin, or if it did, for an amount that interfered substantially with the day-to-day running of the business.

If you can demonstrate the necessary appropriate financial standing it may well be advisable to review your Operator's Licence and to either add a margin to it or to expand any that you currently have.

NEXT WEEK

Part two: Drivers, and what they can do to avoid the risk of losing their PCV licence

Below: When your transport manager's on extended holiday, you need another CPC holder to stand in

Summary:

- Ensure a clear line of communication and management from the top to the bottom of your business.
- Ensure random checks on everyone responsible for maintenance, including drivers, to make sure that they are doing their role properly.
- Properly forward plan your maintenance using a rolling reference period.
- Make sure all maintenance related records are properly filed and retained for at least 15 months.
- Ensure, whenever possible, that there are two CPC holders and that both are not allowed to be on holiday at the same time.
- Review your Operating Licence and consider whether you have the necessary appropriate financial standing for a margin or an increased margin to be on it.
- Remember the Operator Licence holder is responsible for ensuring a roadworthy fleet of vehicles and no-one else. Only the Licence holder will be blamed if someone else does not do their job properly!

CCTV RANGE INCLUDES 'SHUTTERED' REARVIEW CAMERA

Brigade has strengthened its range of Backeye Rear View CCTV systems with the introduction of the new 800 Series. Designed to be totally interchangeable and provide users with maximum flexibility, all the monitors can be matched with a camera to meet specific vehicle and usage requirements. The new range is packed full of features and the multi-camera capability means that rear, forward, and side view monitoring are possible, as is the ability to display other navigation and monitoring equipment through one monitor.

The series includes five TFT LCD flat screen colour monitors ranging from 3.5in to 6.8in. All are fitted with automatic image triggering for maximum safety. There are three cameras in the series: the compact BE-800C with infra-red LEDs for ultra low light performance and an integral microphone so that the driver can hear – as well as see – what is happening; the BE-810C, a shutter camera version of the BE-800C and the BE-820C super-compact mini camera, which enables discrete fitting on a wide variety of vehicles.

The shutter covers the lens until reverse gear is engaged, so that the lens is kept clean and the driver has a clear view of the 'blind' area behind when reversing.

The BE-820C is the smallest Backeye Rear View CCTV camera and, despite its size of just 33x25x36mm (WxHxD), it has an extra-wide field of view and is capable of operating in temperatures of minus 30°C to plus 50°C. Where aesthetics are the key deciding factor, or space for mounting is limited, the BE-820C comes into its own. Its petite size also makes it ideal for use in side-viewing applications.

The BE-800C and BE-810C cameras are capable of operating in the most demanding environments.

Where space is at a premium the BE-835M monitor with its 3.5in high resolution colour TFT LCD flat screen fits in to even the tightest spaces - and can be mounted on the windscreen.

The BE-868M colour TFT LCD monitor, with its 6.8in high-resolution colour screen, is the best choice for commercial vehicle operators looking for a multi-functional unit with quad screen capability.

■ For details call 0870 774 1500 E-mail: *sales@brigade-electronics.com*

Paul Rogers

ROGERS JOINS CCTV COMPANY

21st Century, specialist in wireless CCTV systems, has appointed Paul Rogers as sales and marketing director to bring the company's innovative wireless CCTV systems to a wider market.

21st Century is the UK's leading provider of wireless CCTV, with over 3,000 systems in operation. Rogers will be bringing 21st

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CALL 01733 293246

NEXT ISSUE May 24

ELECTRIC COOLING SYSTEM COULD SAVE 5% FUEL

Traditionally, bus-cooling systems are powered directly by the diesel engine, and can draw up to 50 bhp off the engine, draining power and fuel efficiency.

Portland-based TriMet teamed up with Michigan-based EMP Inc., which makes innovative cooling systems for trucks, military vehicles and NASCAR racing cars, to create and install a new bus cooling system. Six variable speed electric fans, an electric variable speed water pump and an electric mixing valve are computer controlled to deliver optimum heating or cooling to the bus' engine, transmission and heating systems.

For the next eight months, the bus is testing military components and NASCAR racecar cooling technology to potentially boost fuel economy by 5-7% and reduce maintenance costs. Switching the cooling systems over to electrical motors should produce the fuel gains.

The conversion meant more electric power was needed so a high-tech alternator was used, made available through funding from the U.S. Army. One of the agency's goals is to reduce costs by commercializing technology that has both military and commercial uses.

TriMet will test and evaluate the bus' performance until autumn 2006. About 40,000 miles will be put on the test bus during the evaluation period.

■ Details: *www.trimet.org*

Century's innovative portfolio of leading edge technology to a wider audience, which can benefit from its cost saving capabilities. The company's leading brands include ProGuard (an enhanced CCTV system which links with Black Box technology in a WiFi environment to allow operators to monitor activities of staff and passengers) and Heartbeat (a revolutionary maintenance programme that remotely and automatically monitors the operational status of CCTV systems).

Rogers joins 21st Century from Wayfarer Transit Systems where he was sales manager, and has nearly 12 years' experience in the IT and communications industry.

■ Call Paul Rogers on 01353 659564 or email *paulrogers@cctv-uk.com*

RAD FLUSH KIT AIDS COOLING

Agriemach can now offer an inexpensive solution to clogged radiators and engine passages with its new Radiator Flush Kit.

The kit installs in minutes and back flushes the cooling system, which is essential in maintaining efficient coolant circulation around the engine, thereby avoiding engine destroying overheating problems, which may prove to be very costly.

Easy to install and use, the kit is designed to work on most buses and trucks and comes with full operating instructions for a price of only £5.78 including VAT. An essential Tool for every workshop and garage. (PM-DA190)

■ **Further details on 01342 713743 or email: *info@agriemach.com***

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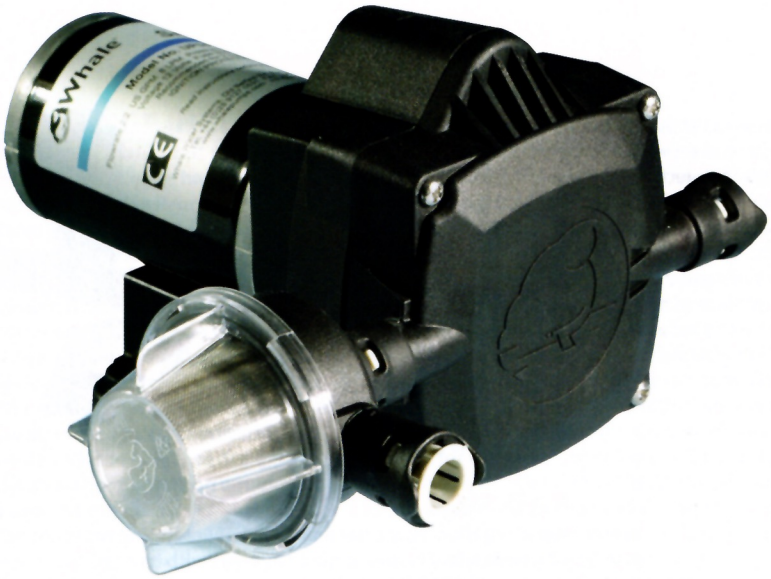


BRADTECH – WHALE 24V PUMP DEVELOPMENT

Water systems specialist Bradtech has announced the first fresh water pump specially designed for use in mobile applications where drinks, hand washing and toilet facilities are necessary for user, passenger or customer comfort.

Developed with the pump experts at Munster Simms, the new Whale 24volt Smartflo has four chambers which provide a quieter, smoother operation.

William Bradburn, MD of Bradtech said: "Mostly, pumps used in passenger transport have not really been designed for this industry. Water is pushed through coffee machines too fast and often causes the operator to be splashed. That gives obvious health and safety issues. So, we decided to work with leading expert, Munster Simms, to develop a pump which works at 24v and is fully adjustable to suit coffee machines, hand washing facilities and toilet flushing."

Design features of the 24v Smartflo include constant water pressure, automatic flow adjustment to meet outlet demand and the ability to run dry without damage.

The pump is fully EMC tested and is available exclusively from Bradtech.

Steve Ticehurst, Works Director of Bradtech said: "This pump has been designed with the end user in mind and we believe it is a superior pump for the industry. Our customers are now replacing existing pumps with the 24v Smartflo and are extremely pleased with its performance."

Munster Simms Engineering, better known under the product brand name Whale, is an independent company engaged in the design, manufacture, marketing and selling of pumps, valves, faucets and plumbing (water systems) for use in mobile or low voltage environments.

■ Details from Bradtech at: Web: *www.bradtech.ltd.uk* , Tel: 01785 282800 or e-mail: *sales@bradtech.ltd.uk*

DURABILITY UPGRADE FOR DISC-LOCK

Disc-Lock Europe, manufacturer and European distributor of the Disc-Lock Safety Wheel Nut, launched the latest version at the CV Show.

Claimed to be the safest wheel nut in the world, the redesign has produced a nut which is virtually indestructible. The unit has been strengthened considerably to overcome excessive over-torquing caused by air-gun abuse. In addition, the height of the middle hexagon-flanged washer has been increased to give better socket engagement and the nut is now coated with a new, environmentally-friendly, anti-corrosion coating, 'GEOMET', which is chrome free and has passed a 720 hours salt spray test.

Bob Hope, managing director of Disc-Lock Europe, said: "The latest version of the Disc-Lock Safety Wheel Nut has already attracted a great deal of interest. It is simple to install and now sufficiently strengthened to overcome the problems caused by serious air-gun abuse. It is also the only product of its type on the market which maintains wheels secure. Following tests at MIRA, undertaken just over a year ago, we can now say categorically, that the Disc-Lock Safety Wheel Nut eliminates the risk of wheel loss and that it is the safest wheel nut in the world."

For further information visit website *www.disc-lock.com*

SERCK SERVICES RELAUNCH RADIATOR BRAND

Serck Services, the UK division of Unipart Automotive Heat Exchange, is relaunching its radiator range following the demise of its main supplier, International Radiators. Serck Services covers a wide range of heat exchange services encompassing a wealth of products for all forms of automotive transport. In order to service this market it is now creating Serck Cooling and a new Midlands-based facility has been commissioned and now has over 20,000 units in stock. Later this year the range will be expanded to include radiators, heaters, oil coolers, intercoolers and air conditioning components – all featured in a new catalogue. Details on *www.serckservices.co.uk*

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PRESTIGE SERIES NO. 26 – SAMUEL LEDGARD

It is not necessary to have a detailed timetable to await the publication of books in The Prestige Series, as they appear to run to an intensive service.

Two of the latest publications – Nos 26 and 30 in the Series – chronicle the history of a further two transport operators in the north of England.

Samuel Ledgard, born in 1874, operated businesses involved with hotels, pubs, the hiring of marquees, outside catering, cattle dealing, quarrying and gravel extraction.

The need to transport his goods naturally led him to develop a haulage business, which led him on by 1924 to take over a small bus company. This take over was the first of many between 1924 and 1943, as he developed a bus empire in competition with his 'hated rival' – the West Yorkshire Road Car Company. By the time he died in 1952, many of the original businesses were moribund, but the bus company flourished under the guiding hand of his executors to continue to provide services in the Leeds, Otley and Ilkley areas of West Yorkshire. No fewer than 185 vehicles were bought by the executors – some new but mainly second-hand, made up of a fascinating mixture of makes, including AEC Reliance and Regent V, Albion, Bedfords, Bristols, Daimlers, Guys, Leylands and a large number of ex London Transport utility Daimlers and (later) RTs.

This 64-page history contains fascinating photographs not only of this eclectic collection but also of Ledgard's pre-war vehicles in town and country, many photographed new on delivery, or after exhibition at Commercial Motor shows. The company operated a mixed fleet of double and single decker vehicles, including the Bristols with Tilling-style bodies which were very rarely used by independent companies.

THE PRESTIGE SERIES NO. 30 - YELLOWAY

The Yelloway company provided coach services in the north west and, through its links with Associated Motorways, to all points of the compass in the UK.

In 1932 Yelloway Motor Services Ltd obtained licences from the (then) newly formed Traffic Commissioners to operate express services from Blackpool and East Lancashire to London, and to Bristol, Exeter and Torquay from Rochdale. Other limited stop services ran between Blackpool and Oldham Rochdale and between Rochdale and Manchester. After 1934, Yelloways expanded as part of the Associated Motorways co-ordinated network, for which the company continued to provide services until the 1970's. In 1976 an agreement with National Travel (NBC) was signed on the co-ordination of routes.

Direct competition for passengers followed de-regulation of express services in 1980, and in 1985 the founder of the company – Hubert Allen – sold the business. The name continued, but maintenance problems led to appearances before the North Western Traffic Commissioner (in 1987 and 1988) and (following a further unsatisfactory inspection of vehicles) the company closed down in November 1988.

Samuel Ledgard – A Reminiscence – by Mike Lockyer and John Banks is published at £9.50 (ISBN No 1 898432 98 8), and Yelloway by Keith Healey and John Banks at £9.50 (ISBN No. 1 898432 45 7), both by Venture publications of 128 Pikes Lane, Glossop, Derbyshire, SK13 8EH.

Chris Heaps

Deliveries

Have you taken delivery of a new vehicle and want to tell the world about it? Email all the details and pictures to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to the address on page 3

DRURY COACHES

Drury Coaches of Goole is aiming for wheelchair users with this Volvo B7R Plaxton Profile.

It's the company's third new Plaxton B7R, and this time comes complete with a side-access wheelchair lift and removable seats with tracking: "We've been very pleased with the previous vehicles," said Roland Drury.

"This time we wanted a vehicle which we could make available for any type of work," Roland Drury explains, "and which we anticipate will hold its value in the future."

So the new Profile is not only fitted with a side-mounted wheelchair lift, it has DDA-specification destination displays. In its standard configuration it has 53 reclining seats with three-point seat belts, but seats close to the side door can be removed to make way for wheelchair users. Tracking on the floor ensures that wheelchairs are securely located once on board.

It is also the first new vehicle for Drury Coaches to feature air-conditioning.

Drury Coaches has been serving Goole for over 30 years and runs seven vehicles. Its new Profile, supplied by Plaxton Coach Sales, will be used primarily on private hires.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Volvo B7R/ Plaxton Profile
Engine Volvo D7C, 275bhp
Transmission ZF auto
Seats 53/49
Spec Side-mounted wheelchair lift, air con
Supplied by Plaxton Coach Sales 01909 551166

LUGG VALLEY PRIMROSE

Lugg Valley Primrose has put another Optare Solo into service following good experience with earlier Solos in its 26-vehicle fleet. This latest addition brings the number of Solos now in service with the Leominster based company to 12.

The new bus - a 31 seat, 9.2 metre full-width model - is running on a 30-mile route from Ludlow to Hereford.

"Solo is ideal for our type of rural operation," says MD Elaine Sankey. "It's a good size for country roads, our drivers find it an easy bus to handle with excellent visibility. It also has a very modern appearance that presents a good image for our business and this must help to attract people onto the buses."

The new Solo has Richards and Shaw Integra seats, with tip-ups in the wheelchair bay and each has a seatbelt as schools contracts are operated. Mobitec LED destination equipment is fitted on the front, side and rear.

The company will maintain the Solo at their own modern workshop. "Our staff find that Solo is a straightforward vehicle to work on with good access to all the major components The use of a full multiplex electrical system is a great aid to fast fault diagnosis and should we need to carry out body repairs, the modular panels are quick and easy to replace.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Optare Solo integral
Engine M-B OM904L 147bhp
Transmission Allison 2000 auto
Seats 31
Spec Mobitec LED destination boards, wheelchair bay
Supplied by Optare Coach Sales 0113 264 5182

AAA COACHES

Midlothian based AAA Coaches have taken delivery of another Volvo - a B7R with Jonckheere bodywork - as part of continued fleet enhancement for their expanding coach hire business.

The vehicle, with a Volvo D7C engine, rated at 275hp, and a ZF 6-speed automatic gearbox, was first choice to supplement their existing fleet of coaches by the family run company who are confident in the product's ability to support their diverse range of services - from weddings and prestigious school contracts, to airport transfers and UK tour work.

Sharon Renton, AAA Coaches Manager explained: "We immediately thought of Volvo due to the product reliability and general all-round after sales service, both from the Volvo dealer at Broxburn and Duncan Crosby the Volvo sales representative.

"We already run two Volvo B12Bs with Sunsundegui bodies, predominantly for contracts with world-renowned public schools. They have proved extremely popular with customers and their drivers, both for their stylish appearance and the driveability that the I-Shift gearbox offers.

"And the 70-seat Plaxton bodied B7R we bought in 2003 specifically to cater for transporting wedding parties is still incredibly popular with those tying the knot.

"While the new B7R has 55 seats it has been bought for its versatility to cover both of these key roles and more!"

AAA Coaches run an extensive fleet of 11 large vehicles with 49 to 70 seats - of which over half are Volvos - along with another 11 vehicles ranging between 8 and 35 seats. Sharon continued, "We are very excited to have bought our 11th larger coach, bringing our total fleet to 22 in all and we have great peace of mind that it is another Volvo."

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Volvo B7R/ Jonckheere Mistral
Engine Volvo D7C, 275bhp
Transmission ZF six-speed auto
Seats 55
Spec Standard
Supplied by Volvo Coach Sales 01509 217700

IVECO EURORIDER BEULAS STERGO È

FACT FILE

Chassis Iveco Eurorider 350
Body Beulas Stergo è
First registered January 1, 2001
Owner Galloway European Coachlines
Since New
Paid £181,000
Major modifications None
Current mileage/km 431,813km
Mileage in current ownership 431,813km

PROS & CONS

Costs last 12 months:
Total £4,000 (estimate)
Service interval Five weeks
Major bills (over £100) Front level valve, alternator problem caused ECU, radio amplifier and speed limiter to malfunction, steering track rod
Average mpg 12.08mpg (est)
Breakdowns One (alternator failure, see above)
Other: None

☺ Economy
☺ Reliability
☺ Mechanical simplicity
☺ Hard-wearing interior
☹ Minor corrosion
☹ Not easy to drive
☹ Fainsa seats too firm

Current condition

Panels and bodywork
★★★☆☆
Still in excellent condition

Seats and flooring
★★★★★
Virtually as new

Driver area
★★★★☆
As new

Engine and gearbox
★★★★☆

Key

☺ Positive points
☹ Negative points

★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★☆ Very good
★★★☆☆ Good
★★☆☆☆ Poor
★☆☆☆☆ Very poor

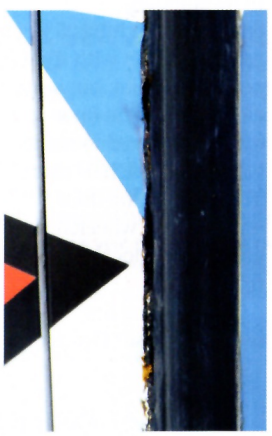
Iveco Eurorider/ Beulas Stergo è

Five years on, Galloway still likes its 'oddball' Iveco

Owner's comments: In a fleet comprised almost entirely of DAF/VDL Van Hools, the Beulas Stergo is a bit of an oddball, but its driver, David, absolutely loves it. When we bought it, at a sensible price, we had low expectations of it but it has confounded us. Apart from a major alternator problem (it has two alternators) - which generated a surge which 'fried' several electrical components - it hasn't broken down, is economical and though the Fainsa seats are a bit firm, it rides really well. We anticipated problems with the power lockers, but didn't get any, and the only reason we've had to complain has been a patch of corrosion on the fillet panel behind the continental door, which Beulas treated but has resurfaced.

These days it's confined to UK touring and school trips but the interior is superb. We retrimmed one seat expecting to see some fade in the moquette, but the new one's a perfect match. David wanted another Beulas, so a new Beulas Cygnus with the Iveco Cursor 10 engine is on its way.

Driver comment: The Iveco Eurorider with its eight-speed, split range gearbox isn't the easiest vehicle to drive. There's significant turbo lag, so you have to plan your moves into traffic carefully, and use the gearbox well to keep good momentum. This has definitely been a one-man coach but once cruising it is effortless up the hills.



Moquette (above) is wearing well and hasn't faded but corrosion is evident (left) on fillet panel

GoSkills' free assessment

A new tool developed by GoSkills – the transport sector skills council – will help operators identify literacy, numeracy and communication problems with employees.

These elements, says GoSkills, have a direct impact on the quality of delivery for companies, but improving employees' all-round abilities not only benefits the operator but is appreciated by the learners.

The Initial Assessment Tool, which takes the form of a computer programme or paper-based assessments, has been assembled with the government's Skills For Life. It has already been launched and now goes into a series of trials with 10 employers, although any operator can simply download the tools direct and participate in the trial, which ends on May 12.

The materials have been prepared to directly reflect situations in the coach, bus and taxi industries, says GoSkills: "Employers have been involved throughout the development process, contributing to the writing of all the materials to be used with the learners. The screening tool will enable employers and trainers to assess individuals' skill levels which will, in turn, help to identify appropriate training."

■ Download the Initial Assessment Tool and Skills for Life materials at *www.toolslibrary.co.uk/transport.htm*

Martyn Roads from M R Educational Consultants, demonstrating the Initial Assessment Tool

Stagecoach London and North West shake-up

Stagecoach London's **MD Barry Arnold** is to retire and is being replaced by current MD of Stagecoach North West, Nigel Barrett.

Barrett is being 'phased in' over the final three months' of Arnold's career, which spans 42 years. "Barry has been a key part of our success in growing our London bus business over the past few years," said MD of Stagecoach UK Bus, Les Warneford.

Meanwhile, the vacant seat left by Barrett's departure from Stagecoach North West will be filled by Chris Bowles, currently the company's commercial director. Bowles has 30 years in the industry, and joined Stagecoach in 1996.

Barry Arnold has worked for Stagecoach for 12 years, heading up the London business since 1997. His bus industry career started in 1964 straight out of school, starting as a clerk for London Transport. During the last 40 years he has worked in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Nigel Barratt's bus career took a similar path, starting as a bus conductor with LT. He has been MD of Stagecoach Teeside and general manager of South West Trains' Feltham division.

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The Green Transport Company
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B60 9AR

www.thegreenbus.org

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the Green bus

Eastbourne Buses

Business Manager

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1996 Volvo Jonckheere

49/53 Recliners, Belts, 6 Speed, Centre Toilet

2001 Ayat Atlas

53 Seater, Single Deck, Air Con, Tested

DAF MB 230

Plaxton, 53 Seats, Belts, 6 Speed Gearbox, Tinted Glass, Curtains, Courier Seat, Tested

Coaches

2005 BMC 60 Seat, 13000m Cummins Auto
1995 Plaxton Premier 49 Seat, Full Executive
1992 & 1994 Toyota Caetano 18-21 Seats
1988 Leyland Tiger Plaxton 3500 53 Seat, Auto
ZF **Dennis Javelin** choice of 36-70 Seats
1985 Setra 49/53 Seats, Merc V8 Engine
Dennis Javelin/Duple 320 1990 57 Seat
Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 3200 1992 53 Seat, Cummins ZF.....£ 9000.00
Daf Plaxton 3500 1989 53 Seat, Tested

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

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1997 P REG DAF SB3000
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1983 LEYLAND TIGERS
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25 seaters, great condition, choice of 3.

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1999 PP IVECO EURO MIDI
Indcar Maxim, 29 seats, air-con, TV, video, extremely good condition, supplied with new test.

1989 PP DENNIS CONDORS
Gardner/Voith, Duple Metsec bodies, 2 door, 106 seaters

1993 K REG DENNIS DART,
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1997 P REG VOLVO OLYMPIANS,
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1995 M REG VOLVO OLYMPIAN,
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51 REG, IVECO

40.C11 2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION 16 LUXURY HIGH BACK SEATS. SLAM DOOR FRONT ENTRANCE WITH LOW STEP, HIGH ROOF, BONDED WINDOWS , LOW MILES 75,000 KMS ONE OWNER EX NHS TRUST.

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PP 1992 TOYOTA OPTIMO 2,

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T REG 1999 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD

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Y REG 2001 VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

2.5TDI AUTOMATIC, POWERED STEERING, MWB, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 5 SEATS PLUS 1 WHEELCHAIR, UNWIN TRACKING, WITH SIDE MOUNTED RICON TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, MINT CONDITION, 33,000 MILES

X REG 2001 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD

MANUAL,CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, PAS, 12 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 63,000 MILES ONE REMAINING

2000 V REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DIESEL, 5 SPEED, PAS, L W B, EXCEL CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION, ONE OWNER

2001 51 REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, LOW MILES,

2001 Y REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI, 5 SPEED, PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER.

2001 Y REG RENAULT MASTER

LM35 2.5, 5 SPEED ,PAS, LWB, STANFORD PTS CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 12 HIGH BACK SEATS OR 8 PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIRS RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 6000 MILES ONLY.

V REG VOLKSWAGEN LT46

TURBO DIESEL, PAS, LWB, WHITACRES CONVERSION, LARGE POWER PLUG DOOR, HIGH ROOF, 16 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING, RATCLIFFE UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER, COIF.

52 REG 2003 RENAULT MASTER

LM35, 2.5, 5 SPEED, PAS, LONG WHEEL BASE, MELLOR CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 16 HIGH BACK M2 TESTED SEATS PLUS DRIVER, MINT CONDITION, ONE OWNER, 6,000 MILES,

2003 03 REG RENAULT MASTER,

MM33, 2.2 DCI ,5 SPEED ,PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP,11 SEATS OR 6 PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, VERY LOW MILES,

2001 Y REG FORD TRANSIT

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02 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP, PAS, LUXURY SPEC FRANK GUY CONVERSION, TWIN SLD'S, TINTED WINDOWS, 10 HIGH BACK SEATS,OVER HEAD LOCKERS, WITH AIR & LAMPS REAR STORAGE AREA, EBERSPACHER CLIMATE CONTROL, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

2000 X REG RENAULT MASTER

SM33, 2.2 DCI, 5 SPEED, PAS, SWB, ATLAS CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 8 SEATS OR 4 PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER LOW MILES CHOICE OF TWO,

NEW 06 REG, IVECO 40.C13

2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION 14 HIGH BACK COGENT SEATS. DOUBLE FRONT PASSENGER SEAT, SIDE-LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, HIGH ROOF, M2 FLOOR, LOTS OF SPACE, DELIVERY MILEAGE ONLY, IN STOCK

NEW 06 REG, IVECO

40.C13 2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION 14 HIGH BACK COGENT SEATS. DOUBLE FRONT PASSENGER SEAT ,SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, HIGH ROOF, M2 FLOOR, LOT'S OF SPACE, DELIVERY MILEAGE ONLY, IN STOCK

NEW UN REGISTERED VOLKSWAGEN LT46

TURBO DIESEL, VDL KUSTER CONVERSION, 16 SEATS. LARGE POWER PLUG DOOR, HIGH ROOF, BONDED WINDOWS , LOW M2 FLOOR, M2 HIGH BACK SEATS 3 WHEEL CHAIR POSITIONS ,TRACKING, HEATER, LOWERED FLOOR WITH FOLD OUT SIDE RAMP

1996 R REG PP FORD TRANSIT

190 LWB, 2.5, MELLOR CONVERSION, LONG WHEEL BASE HIGH ROOF 14 SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S PLUS 1 WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, PLS TAIL LIFT, FRONT ENTRY DOOR WITH FOLD DOWN STEP, EX CHARITY, LOW MILEAGE 58,000 miles

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04 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

MWB, 2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP,PAS. ADVACED CONVERSION, SLD, 8 HIGH BACK SEATS + DRIVER, REAR BULK HEAD FITTED WITH MICROWAVE AND HANDWASH REAR STORAGE AREA WITH HAND WASH AND TOOL STORAGE, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

1999 T REG PEUGEOT BOXER

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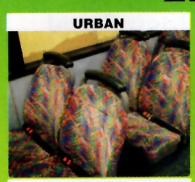

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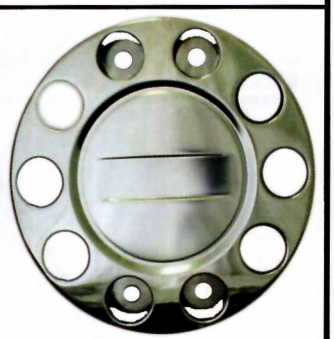

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This is ground control...

With bus manufacturers always banging on about space-age technology, it must have given the good people of Manchester a bit of a shock to see an astronaut preparing to launch.

The man in the white suit had found himself stranded - not exactly lost in space, but needing a lift back from the travel agency, where he'd been promoting Mars Quest exhibition at the Mother Ship, the Museum of Science and Industry. Pretty obviously, the best choice of transport for astronauts is a shuttle.

Of course, the Metroshuttle doesn't reach escape velocity or make you weightless, but at least the journey is free, as opposed to several million dollars...

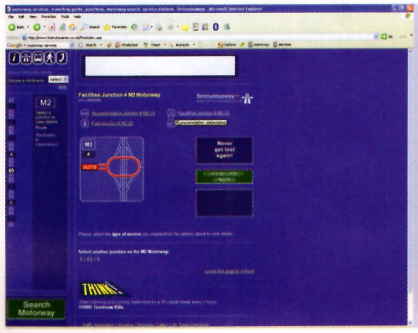
VOSA, Tanzania style

News reaches us of a whistle-blower in Dar es Salaam who has revealed that the bus operators running the 'daladala' bus services reserve half the fares to pay off the police.

The deal is, apparently, simple. You save on the boring things like licences, maintenance, brake pads and tyres and go off-route to cherry-pick any oasis of passengers, then put the money to one side.

In due course, a policeman climbs aboard and points out the error of your ways, at which juncture you pay the standard 'fine' and he pushes off, reporting back to the police station where he splits the loot with the senior officer.

This represents a big saving to the operator and the state, which no longer has to deal with nit-picking forms and officialdom, and can rest assured that it won't have a police strike on its hands because they have a supplementary income...



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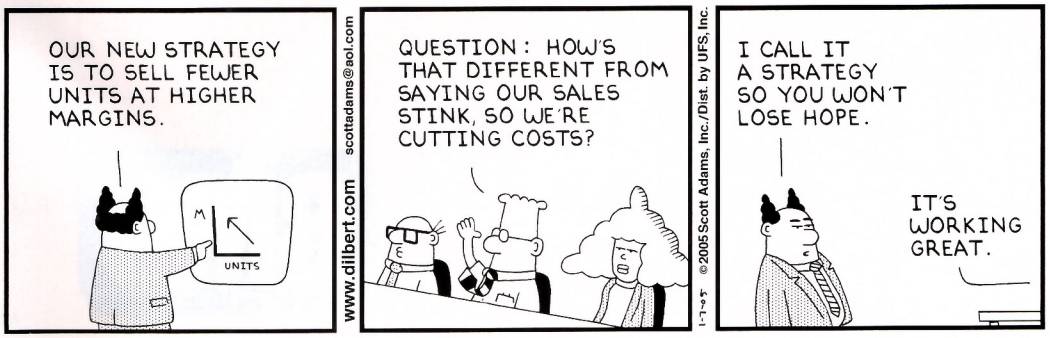
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Two minute interview

Full name Christopher Wilding
Age 63
Occupation Now retired, formerly Manager of Lever's Coaches for Wilts & Dorset
Will there be more passengers on coaches and buses in the future? Inevitably yes
If 'yes', who will they be, and if 'no,' why not? We are currently in a fuel price crisis AGAIN, but we haven't seen anything yet. In the next few years, fuel for private use will either not be available or will be so highly priced that the public will have to look to Public Transport.
Which recent legislation has been most irritating or useless? The slavish following of dictates from the EU which are altering British life in totally unnecessary ways. Weights and measures are a prime example. If I want to buy a pound of carrots, then what concern is it of the EU.
Give the industry's business managers 20 words of helpful advice... Keep up standards, don't give in to politicians, make best use of the system, and remember you are the experts!
When you got your first job in the industry, was it love at first sight? Definitely, selling tickets for Evening Tours on Southsea sea-front to happy holidaymakers who wanted a two hour trip that included a ½ hour pub stop. No holds barred selling with competition from two other operators.
Which vehicle do you love the most, and why? My first love has two wheels but sails on water rather than on dry land. To sail on the paddle steamer Waverley is an experience that everyone with the slightest interest in transport over the last 60 years should not miss.

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